



3 3433 06252295 2

*The*  
*New York Public Library*  
\* \*  
*Astor, Lenox and Tilden*  
*Foundations*

7-1RGV

Van Dyke



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation







THE NEW NEW YORK

1-1868  
New York  
— 1868



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO  
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED  
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA  
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.  
TORONTO

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
S. M. B. CO.  
+  
1900









THE OLD AND THE NEW

THE  
NEW NEW YORK

A COMMENTARY ON THE PLACE  
AND THE PEOPLE

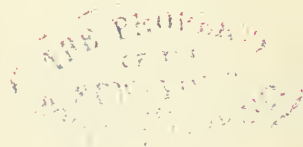
BY  
JOHN C. VAN DYKE

ILLUSTRATED  
BY JOSEPH PENNELL

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1909

*All rights reserved*



150964B

COPYRIGHT, 1909,  
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

---

Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1909.

Norwood Press  
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.  
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

SEP 20 1903

To  
GEORGE B. McCLELLAN  
WHOSE EFFORTS IN MUNICIPAL ART HAVE IDENTIFIED  
HIM WITH THE NEW CITY  
THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED BY BOTH THE WRITER  
AND THE ILLUSTRATOR

39X677



## PREFACE

THE title of this book describes it with sufficient accuracy. The *new* city is pictured rather than the old; the present appearance is recited rather than the history of Dutch and English successions. This, of course, implies limitations, but not necessarily a meager field of survey. The difficulty has been, not the paucity, but the prodigality of the materials. Where one should begin has presented as much of a problem as where one should leave off. Besides, in a swift-expanding city like New York everything is more or less confused by movement, by casual phenomena, by want of definition. Self-imposed barriers are necessary to keep one from being lost in the vastness of the swirl.

The writer and the illustrator have not escaped the embarrassment of many points of view, but gradually the belief has come to them that, pictorially, the larger aspect of New York is the life and energy of its people projected upon the background of its commerce. It is this character of the place and its inhabitants that they have sought to set forth, convinced that character is interesting in itself, and that true municipal beauty must

be more or less beholden to it. Those who believe only in the planned and plotted city will, no doubt, shake their heads over this; but many times in civic story the characteristic has proved more attractive than the formal. It has been demonstrated in the present day, here in New York. Those who have erected the new city, as need has dictated, have builded better than they knew. They have given us, not the classic, but the picturesque — a later and perhaps a more interesting development.

At least such is the chief contention of this book. With what reason or conviction it is pictured or argued is the privilege of the reader to decide. Therefore let us leave off explanations and begin.

J. C. V. D.

NEW YORK, *May*, 1909.



# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE APPROACH FROM THE SEA . . . . .	21
III. SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS . . . . .	41
IV. THE STREETS IN THE MORNING . . . . .	59
V. DOWN TOWN . . . . .	77
VI. SKY-SCRAPERS . . . . .	93
VII. THE NEW CITY . . . . .	113
VIII. ANCIENT LANDMARKS . . . . .	131
IX. THE EBB TIDE . . . . .	149
X. FIFTH AVENUE AT FOUR . . . . .	169
XI. SHOPS AND SHOPPING . . . . .	187
XII. NEW YORK BY NIGHT . . . . .	205
XIII. HOMES AND HOUSES . . . . .	221
XIV. THE BOWERY . . . . .	237
XV. THE TENEMENT DWELLERS . . . . .	253
XVI. CITY GUARDIANS . . . . .	271
XVII. THE BRIDGES . . . . .	291
XVIII. THE WATER-WAYS . . . . .	309
XIX. DOCKS AND SHIPS . . . . .	325
XX. BREATHING SPACES . . . . .	341
XXI. MUNICIPAL ART . . . . .	357
XXII. FOR MERE CULTURE . . . . .	371
XXIII. THE ISLANDS . . . . .	387
XXIV. THE LARGER CITY . . . . .	401
XXV. TRAFFIC AND TRADE . . . . .	417



## PLATES IN COLOR

The Old and the New . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
I. Madison Square . . . . .	2
II. Battery Park near Bowling Green . . . . .	22
III. Washington Square . . . . .	42
IV. The Plaza . . . . .	60
V. Lower Broadway — Election Time . . . . .	78
VI. Building a Sky-scraper . . . . .	94
VII. New York Times Building . . . . .	114
VIII. The City Hall and World Building . . . . .	132
IX. Hudson Park (Greenwich) . . . . .	150
X. Fifth Avenue through the Washington Arch . . . . .	170
XI. Broadway from Madison Square . . . . .	188
XII. Coney Island — on the Beach . . . . .	206
XIII. Apartment Houses, Upper Broadway . . . . .	222
XIV. Chinatown . . . . .	238
XV. Bleecker Street . . . . .	254
XVI. Second Avenue . . . . .	272
XVII. High Bridge, Harlem River . . . . .	292
XVIII. Near the Battery . . . . .	310
XIX. Near the Shipping District . . . . .	326
XX. Morningside Park . . . . .	342
XXI. Entrance Prospect Park, Brooklyn . . . . .	358
XXII. University of New York . . . . .	372
XXIII. Governors Island . . . . .	388
XXIV. Elevated Road at One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street . . . . .	402
XXV. Along Riverside Drive . . . . .	418



## PLATES IN BLACK AND WHITE

	FACING PAGE
1. Lower Bay . . . . .	1
2. New York from Upper Bay . . . . .	7
3. A Nearer View . . . . .	10
4. Ferries and Sky-scrapers . . . . .	16
5. Coney Island from Bay . . . . .	24
6. Crossing Ferries . . . . .	28
7. Docks and Slips . . . . .	35
8. New York Custom House . . . . .	37
9. The Flatiron (Fuller Building) . . . . .	44
10. New York in Rain (Park Avenue) . . . . .	46
11. Fort Lee in Haze . . . . .	49
12. Lower City in Mist . . . . .	51
13. Broadway — Down Town . . . . .	62
14. Broad Street . . . . .	64
15. Ann Street . . . . .	71
16. Exchange Place . . . . .	74
17. Park Row Building . . . . .	85
18. City Investment and Singer Buildings . . . . .	87
19. Terminal Buildings from West Street . . . . .	90
20. Little Flatiron — Maiden Lane . . . . .	92
21. Sky-scrapers from Brooklyn Heights . . . . .	99
22. Working at Night on Foundations . . . . .	103
23. Among the Tall Buildings . . . . .	106
24. Post Office and City Hall Park . . . . .	110
25. Looking down Madison Avenue . . . . .	117
26. Metropolitan Museum and Eighty-Second Street . . . . .	119
27. West Street Building . . . . .	122
28. Singer Building — Early Evening . . . . .	124
29. Trinity Churchyard . . . . .	135

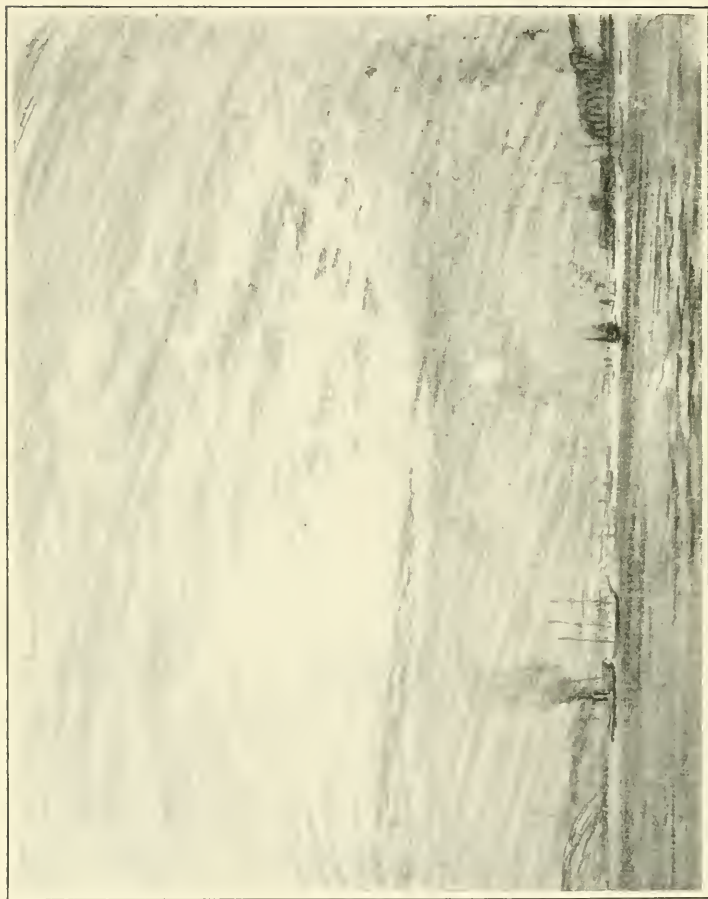
	FACING PAGE
30. St. Paul's and Park Row Building . . . . .	138
31. St. Paul's — Interior . . . . .	145
32. The Aquarium, Battery Park . . . . .	147
33. Post Office from St. Paul's Porch . . . . .	158
34. Mott Street . . . . .	160
35. The New Tombs, Center Street . . . . .	163
36. Grace Church, Broadway . . . . .	165
37. Fifth Avenue at Thirty-Fourth Street . . . . .	172
38. St. Patrick's Cathedral from Madison Avenue . . . . .	174
39. Upper Fifth Avenue . . . . .	177
40. Fifth Avenue from Metropolitan Museum . . . . .	184
41. Broadway near Tenth Street . . . . .	192
42. Twenty-Third Street . . . . .	199
43. Altman's, Fifth Avenue . . . . .	200
44. Tiffany's, Fifth Avenue . . . . .	202
45. Sherman Statue — Evening . . . . .	209
46. Upper Broadway — Night . . . . .	215
47. Plaza by Moonlight . . . . .	216
48. Sherry's (left) and Delmonico's (right) . . . . .	218
49. Beginning of Madison Avenue . . . . .	224
50. Madison Avenue Houses . . . . .	231
51. Fifth Avenue Houses . . . . .	232
52. The Ansonia . . . . .	234
53. The Bowery . . . . .	240
54. Elevated Road on the Bowery . . . . .	247
55. Across the Bowery looking East . . . . .	248
56. Jewish Cemetery (near Bowery) . . . . .	250
57. Tenements near Brooklyn Bridge . . . . .	261
58. East River Tenements . . . . .	263
59. Elevated Road on Second Avenue . . . . .	266
60. Recreation Pier . . . . .	268
61. Police Headquarters . . . . .	275
62. Criminal Court Building . . . . .	279
63. Bridge of Sighs . . . . .	282

	FACING PAGE
64. Site of New Municipal Building . . . . .	286
65. Brooklyn Bridge . . . . .	295
66. Manhattan Bridge (in construction) . . . . .	298
67. East River Bridge . . . . .	305
68. Bridges on the Harlem . . . . .	307
69. The Lower Hudson from Singer Tower . . . . .	318
70. The East River . . . . .	320
71. The Lower East River . . . . .	323
72. The Harlem . . . . .	325
73. Old Ships, South Street . . . . .	332
74. The Mauretania . . . . .	334
75. Tugs and Steamers . . . . .	337
76. From Coenties Slip . . . . .	341
77. Lake in the Central Park . . . . .	348
78. St. Nicholas Avenue . . . . .	352
79. Palisades and Hudson . . . . .	355
80. Riverside Drive — Grant's Tomb . . . . .	357
81. St. John the Divine (in construction) . . . . .	364
82. Ward's Pilgrim, the Central Park . . . . .	366
83. Fountain on Riverside Drive . . . . .	369
84. Soldier's Monument, Riverside Drive . . . . .	371
85. New York Botanical Museum, Bronx Park . . . . .	376
86. Public Library, Fifth Avenue . . . . .	382
87. College of the City of New York . . . . .	384
88. Hall of Fame, University of New York . . . . .	386
89. Bedloes Island — Statue of Liberty . . . . .	391
90. Island from the Battery . . . . .	394
91. Staten Island Factories . . . . .	396
92. East River Islands from Jefferson Park . . . . .	400
93. Fort George by Night . . . . .	405
94. Pennsylvania Railroad Station (in construction) . . . . .	407
95. East River from Williamsburgh Bridge . . . . .	410
96. Brooklyn Bridge from Ferry Shed . . . . .	412
97. West Street looking North . . . . .	421
98. East River — Brooklyn Side . . . . .	424









PL. 1.—LOWER BAY

## INTRODUCTION





• PL. I. — MADISON SQUARE







THE PROPERTY OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

CONSTANTINOPLE, seen in the early evening from the Marmora, is perhaps the most beautiful city in the world. It lifts from the water, takes form from out the opalescent distance, like some vision of *The Thousand and One Nights Entertainment*. The yellow walls and towers of old Byzantium, the red-tiled buildings that crowd along the seven hills of Stamboul, the silver-domed mosques of Achmet, of Mohammed, of Bajazet, the dark green cypresses in the Seraglio Gardens, the restless water at one's feet, the wonderful light that seems always overhead, and the rosy air that blends them all into harmony, make up a picture never to be forgotten. The glamour and the romance of the East become, for the moment, realities. The realm of enchantment lies just before you.

As the ship draws nearer and swings around Seraglio Point into the Golden Horn, new vistas of even greater splendor open and deepen. The harbor with its forests of masts, the Galata Bridge — the whole eastern side of the city — lie in the shadow of the Stamboul hills; the domes of Sancta Sophia lift against the sunset west,

a violet light gathers about the minarets of the mosque of Solymon, the rosy air turns into a golden mist, and through it the towers of Pera look supernaturally splendid. Haroun al Raschid, in fancy free, never built a city more beautiful! It is a dream city. If you touch it, it will fade away and leave only a grouping of harsh facts.

But touch it you must whether you will or will not. You are disembarked, sent ashore, and, at first, are delighted with the way certain colors in shop fronts, flags, and costumes "cut out," with the quaintness of rambling buildings, with the ships and crowds and all the barbaric yawp of the streets. But presently you begin to lose the *ensemble*. The light and atmosphere no longer bind together. The forms of buildings become grotesque, the streets grow squalid, the people, the dogs, the horses, make up a mean and hideous entanglement of life; the noises are deafening, the odors unbearable, the filth untellable. Before the stars are out you have possibly concluded (and not without reason) that Constantinople may be beautiful at a distance, and picturesque in spots close at hand; but that it certainly is not architectural, not structural, not a homogeneous civic unit like Paris. The larger elements of design and system are lacking. It is something that just "happened."

Singularly enough there is in New York a superficial likeness to Constantinople. Even the height and location of the ground with the contours cut by the rivers are not

dissimilar. A glance at the map will show the Hudson corresponding to the Marmora, the East River to the Golden Horn, the Upper Bay to the Bosphorus. Other resemblances derive naturally from these. Manhattan becomes recognizable as Stamboul, the Battery as Seraglio Point, Brooklyn as the heights of Pera, Staten Island as Scutari. Even the Brooklyn Bridge can be tortured into a resemblance to the Galata Bridge, and the Williamsburgh Bridge is an exaggerated suggestion of the upper bridge on the Golden Horn.

The likeness carries on (fancifully if you will) into the impression produced at first sight. Both cities are seen at their best from the water; both are beautiful from a distance and for a similar reason. Light and color gleaming from towers and spires and pinnacles, a foreground of water, a background of blue sky, a rosy-blue envelope of air, make up the attractive quality of each. The white sky-scraper of New York, that thoughtless people jeer at, catches light as readily as a Moslem minaret; the solid "blocks" standing shoulder to shoulder along the streets, the bunched group of high buildings in the lower city, make up walls more massive than those of Stamboul; and if New York lacks the silvery domes of Constantinople, it is not without its tall towers flying flags against the blue, and such graceful traceries in the air as the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges.

Seen from a point in the Upper Bay where the Brooklyn

Bridge first comes into view and the sky-scrapers in the lower city crowd together like distant mountain peaks, New York is more striking, more impressive, than any other city on the globe. It looms through the blue mist, not with any Oriental romance about it, but with a feeling of tremendous bulk and power. The mass of it makes you realize the energy back of it, excites a wonder as to its fashioning, overawes you with its possibilities. There is no mystery here. New York is not a dream city. It is as real as the mountain walls of the Alps, as apparent as the white shaft of the Matterhorn, but picturesque in a similar way and for a similar reason. The Alpine lift of it, the clear light of it, the brilliant color, the serene sky, the enveloping air, are peculiarly beautiful.

But as you come closer to the city, the measurable likeness to Constantinople returns to you. The illusion produced by distance begins to fade. Color once more "cuts out" in sharp patches, the tall buildings lose their grouping and assume tower-like isolation; the light becomes more fierce, the shadows more violent. The picture gets out of tone, out of value. The contrasts appear so sharp, the transitions so swift, that you are perhaps bewildered. The grotesque and the grandiose, the savage and the civilized, the luxurious and the poverty-stricken, touch on every side.

Once in the streets all thought of a united and harmonious picture vanishes into thin air. Jostling details,

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
MUSEUM OF  
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY  
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



PL. 2. — NEW YORK FROM UPPER BAY



harsh realities, are flung at you too violently to be merged into an *ensemble*. The picturesque still crops out in spots and patches at every turn, but it requires some mental (and physical) firmness to stop and enjoy it. There is a great movement going on about you, a surge of struggling humanity; and there is a great roar, the metallic-electric hum of power in action. If you are a stranger within the gates perhaps this means chaos to you, sheer mob madness; and possibly before nightfall you will have concluded that Manhattan, like Constantinople, is lacking in homogeneity, wholly wanting in structural unity, in fact a mere agglomeration of buildings on a point of land. The check-board "blocks," the recurrent regularity of streets, you admit, point to something planned; but the buildings are eruptive and the whole city abnormal — something again that apparently just "happened."

There is an explanation, if not an excuse, for this. The city belongs to a republic, a great democracy. It is very apparent in New York that every one stands firmly on his rights as an individual, and does about as he pleases. Architectural conformity to a general design is something not required, not planned, not even contemplated. Quite the reverse. If your neighbor does a thing one way, it is considered a proper assertion of your rights to do it the other way. If an office building soars twenty stories into the air, a bank building near it will more than likely stop at a story and a half. If one lifts upward in terra-cotta, the

other will flatten out in white marble. After thirty years of brick and stone fronts in monotonous row, block upon block, a great change has come over the spirit of the dream and now, in the new buildings, the other extreme is sought. Nothing shall be like anything else, nothing shall conform except by the law of contrariety. In materials brick shall meet granite, and granite shall join to steel, and steel be followed by marble or terra-cotta or concrete; but two of a kind shall not stand side by side. And never by design or acquiescence shall adjoining buildings be of the same color. Even in brick there is forever the slight difference in coloring, caused by the different clay, the firing, or the pigmentation, that marks apart one's building from his neighbor's and thus asserts an individuality.

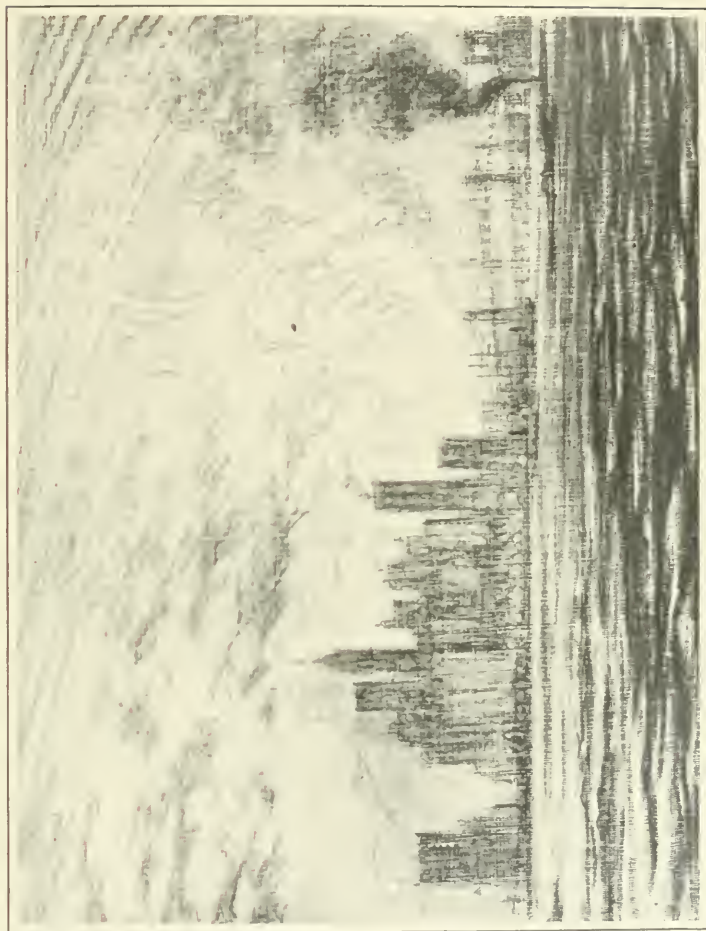
The assertion of the individual is possibly the cause of the city's architectural incongruities. Everyone seems struggling as hard as he can to keep from losing himself in the body corporate. There are very few who wish to be simply citizens, to conform to civic laws, and to temper architectural aspirations to a sky line or a curb line. The average New York business man wants no self-effacement, no simple life. On the contrary, publicity, commercially and socially, is sought for; and being "in the public eye," as the phrase goes, seems to be the one thing needful. The buildings of the new city are more or less reflective of this obtrusive individuality. The love of prominence has produced homes and stores and sky-scrapers that are, if

convenient and useful, not the less blatant advertisements of their owners' families or businesses. What other object could induce an individual, or an aggregation of individuals, to build a silverware shop that suggests an overgrown Venetian palace, or apartment houses, French, Italian, Greek, Moorish, Turkish, in their ornamentation, or hotels after almost any and every plan on the footstool that is unique or striking? What is the meaning of the keen rivalry among the owners of the high buildings as to which shall be the highest, and the vaporizings in the newspapers about which has the greatest number of occupants? Half of the "freak" buildings in New York are not well-meant architectural failures, but deliberate efforts to catch the eye and advertise someone or his wares.

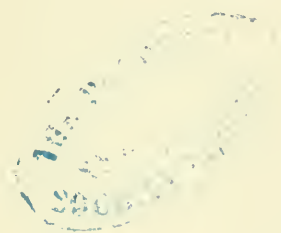
Even the creditable buildings — substantial structures that are not to be despised as art and cannot be regarded wholly as advertisements — reflect, in measure, the desire for distinction, for aloofness, for novelty. How otherwise can we understand a Greek temple worked over and made to do service as a stock-exchange, or a Roman arch adapted to meet the requirements of a clearing-house, or a sixteenth-century Veronese council hall exaggerated into a printing-shop? The desire for singularity is quite as pronounced in dwelling houses. French chateaux that are meaningless without their landscapes, Dutch houses that need water as a complement, Swiss chalets that belong in the Alps, and Palladian conglomerations that

perhaps once belonged in Italy, measure up to a common curb and look down into the same asphalt street with the brown-stone front of yore. Evidently these people propose to have nothing monotonous or conventional, cost what it may; and though they imitate the dead and gone of England or Spain, they will not copy their next-door neighbors.

This cry of the individual in brick and stone and steel, this strain for novelty or peculiarity or mere "loudness," produces variety enough in all conscience. And it also produces picturesqueness, but one can hardly claim for it unity. There is a want of coherence, of *ensemble*. No amount of civic pride can find excuse for the inconsistencies that crop out at every point, and it is impossible to be in sympathy with the stupidities and inanities perpetrated by the semi-civilized that flock into New York and by mere numbers give a savage tang to the city. In fact, the savagery of New York is at first more marked than its civilization, its vices more pronounced than its virtues. Wherever one goes he finds these sharply contrasted. What else could be expected! A million people with a million tastes and perfect freedom to express them as they please, a chorus where each member is allowed to sing his own tune in his own way, mean necessarily a want of harmony. New York is not a harmonious symmetrical city like Paris, and the fact is generally conceded by New Yorkers themselves.



PL. 3.—A NEARER VIEW



Nor is it a restful city. Aside from the noise of it, the very sight of it keeps you ever on the alert. The long avenues of Paris dwindling away in linear perspective, the roof lines as unbroken as the curb lines, might put you to sleep with their undisturbed repose. The sameness of Madrid or the uniformity of new Rome, or the cast-iron dullness of Berlin are likewise conducive to somnolence. But when you drive through New York you have to look about you. Its variety is startling, disturbing, even shocking at times. It is a city quite by itself, a city of contrasts, with as little rest in its sky line as in the ragged mountains of Mexico, as little repose in its streets as in the lava stream of a volcano. Oh, to be sure, there are quiet spots in the parks and along the rivers, quaint nooks in the side streets, odd angles here and there where everything is so still it is difficult to realize that you are in New York at all. Everyone knows these spots, with their doorways and garden walls and overhanging trees, for the magazine writer has written about them and the painter has illustrated them many times; but they are merely surface spots, — the exceptions, not the rule. The place is no quieter than its loudest note, no more restful than the inside of its stock-exchange, no more reposeful than the reach of its most aggressive sky-scraper.

And hence, it is said, the city is an unlivable place; a great shop in which people barter and sell, get rich quick and die early, but cannot rationally live and have their



being. Perhaps there is truth in that statement, as we shall see hereafter, and yet several millions of people who are now existent within the city, and unknown millions without who wish they could arrange to live within, would seem to confute it. They live somehow and have the appearance of enjoying life, though it may be they never arrive at the fullness of being vouchsafed to people in staid London or methodical Berlin.

Perhaps a general statement that no city is quite as healthful and rational a place to live in as the country would be nearer the truth. The herding together of people in great centers, the incessant milling that goes on in the streets, the continual rubbing of minds and touching of hands, with one man's elbow in another man's ribs, and his toe forever galling his neighbor's kibe, are things that never yet led to the development of the virtues. They breed selfishness and all its allied train of evils, and they tend necessarily to the lawless assertion of the individual, which in turn produces that want of harmony which we have already noted. It might be better morally and physically for families to live farther apart and see each other less frequently. But evidently they do not think so. They answer the academic question as to which is preferable, city or country, by moving into the cities — at least a great many do.

And the flocking into New York is greater than into any other American metropolis. It draws like a load-



stone not only from our own interior states, but from foreign countries. Its increase from without when seen in statistics is something remarkable. And each year gives a higher figure. Why is this? Why do they come? Why do they not stay where they are or go to some other place? Obviously because they find New York attractive, entertaining, amusing, perhaps improving.

Does the city then respond to Matthew Arnold's test of a civilization: "Is it interesting?" Most assuredly. It is the most interesting place in the New World, and that is the chief reason, aside from business relations, why people keep trooping to it from all points of the compass. There is "something to see there" is the way the response comes to you. Naturally it depends upon each individual what he sees and if it interests him. Some are content with seeing streets and shop windows; some seek the charm of the Central Park; some are amused by monuments, museums, and theaters; some are delighted with the Stock Exchange, the Subway, the Bowery, or the Battery. Thousands are interested in fires, parades, slums, and police; and thousands again are devoted only to art, music, literature, or the sciences.

But the omnipresent interest of New York — to New Yorkers themselves as well as outsiders — is the passing throng, the great flux, the moving mass of people on the streets. It may be an outcrop of the social instinct or merely a vagabond curiosity, but almost everyone is

ready to crane his neck to watch the mob as it passes. The interest is usually of a superficial nature. We may be looking only at heads and faces, at strides and straddles, at fools and fashions; but still we look. Nor is this interest confined to any one class or quarter of the city. The man who watches the people hurrying along Fifth Avenue from his club window, or the woman who scans them through a lorgnette from the window of her brougham, are, in this respect at least, akin to the tenement house family that watches the crowd from a fire-escape, or to the scullery maid who hangs half her person out of the back window to see the tops of people's hats. The human interest is always absorbing.

What causes this never-ending ebb and flow of human currents up and down the avenues and through the cross streets? Whence comes this uneasy energy so manifest in New York life? What is the initial force that sends wave after wave of humanity hither and yon each morning and evening, and makes of New York a city of almost perpetual movement? Undoubtedly the motive power comes from commerce, trade, traffic,—what is commonly called “business.” The energy is generated by wealth, its pursuit or its expenditure. And the wealth is here in New York more than in any other American city. It has not all been created here by any means. In fact, it represents the industry of almost every state in the union. Generally speaking the source of power lies

without, in the surrounding country, in the productive Far West perhaps; but the central dynamos are in New York. It is the power house by the sea where the energy is stored, and from which in turn energy is supplied.

There will be those to rise up with indignant protest that there are other things in New York than trade and commerce. Quite true. The leaders in art, literature, music, and the drama, the great ones in law and medicine, the famous preachers, the celebrities in science, in engineering, in philanthropy, in political life, have their headquarters if not always their residences here. In addition the city is stocked to overflowing with schools, colleges, universities, societies, clubs, charity organizations, hospitals, lecture halls, museums, art galleries — all the appurtenances and appliances of the higher and the intellectual life. But the sky-scraper of commerce looms above the university and the art gallery on the horizon line of the city; and the master builder of the sky-scraper, the so-called captain of industry, seems to fill the most conspicuous place in the interest and affections of the city's people. For all its facilities and its acquisitions of a purely intellectual or educational nature — and we shall recount them hereafter — the key-note of the city is taken from its commerce. The enormous buildings, the roar of traffic in the streets, the babel of tongues, the glare of lights, the strident screech of car wheels, speak the business character of the city as the

hum of a top its spinning motion. If there is one feature of the city predominant above all others it is its life, its vitality, its tremendous energy kept forever in action by commerce.

A material feature? Yes, but it calls for no apology. All the famed towns of Europe — Florence, Venice, Vienna, Paris, London — came to greatness through their wealth and commerce. Their streets and parks and plazas, their public buildings and cathedrals and campaniles which we to-day call “beautiful,” were in their time merely the manifestation of energy as applied to material needs. And they were beautiful largely because they were well fitted to their time and people. Fitness to a designed end is always admirable, just as admirable in a modern battleship or sky-scraper as in a Venetian barca or a mediæval bell-tower. For wherever or whenever the work is perfectly adapted to use it takes upon itself character; and it is no new theory under the sun that beauty lies in character perhaps more often than in proportion, symmetry, or grace.

Why not then beauty in the city of New York? Is not everything in it well fitted (or rapidly becoming so at least) to fulfill its functions as a great seaport, a commercial center, a nation’s metropolis? Has it not already a distinct, a decisive character of its own? Of course it will never become beautiful in a Florentine or even a Parisian sense. Those ideals of fitness have



PL. 4.—FERRIES AND SKY-SCRAPERS



passed, and the likeness will not be repeated in this western world. Why should we follow outworn precedents? What would you have in twentieth-century New York, — city walls affording no protection to the city, lofty campanili with bell-ringing obsolescent, quaint bridges for a few hundred foot-passengers, instead of great structures to accommodate hundreds of thousands? This new civilization calls for a different expression in art from that. It calls for the things that reveal our western life and its energy. If we build for our present-day needs with honesty and sincerity, we shall have no cause to blush.

This, however, to the average man, in or out of New York, is a somewhat violent conclusion. He blushes unconsciously and offers apologies profusely for the sky-scrapers, the tunnels, the bridges, the subways. But there is no good reason for his doing so. They are necessities of the city's life, they work perfectly, fulfilling each its aim and purpose, each helping on the other like the wheels of a great machine in motion. And after their kind they are every one of them right, characteristic, and beautiful. Their fitness makes them so.

But how very difficult it is to make the New Yorker believe that utility is the basis of beauty. He keeps harking back to Venetian buildings and bridges, thinking perhaps because they are now picturesque they never could have been useful. "Will New York ever become



like that?" he asks. No; it certainly will not. But in its own way it is just as beautiful, just as picturesque at the present time, as London or Paris or any other European city.

Unfortunately, though we have eyes, the majority of us see very little with them. Not one in a hundred of its citizens has ever seen New York. It is too near. There is no perspective, no proper focus. Even our painter people are a little bewildered by its "bigness." They do scraps of color, odd bits along the Harlem, a city square or street; but, with a few exceptions, they have not risen to the vast new city. That the "big" things, the high bridges, the colossal sky-scrapers, the huge factories, the enormous waterways, are pictorial in themselves needs no wordy argument. The illustrations in this volume are sufficient proof. In them Mr. Pennell has shown that the material is here and that it needs only the properly-adjusted eyes to see its beauty. That beauty, in the original as in the pictures, is not a harmony of streets, squares, and houses, nor a formal arrangement of monuments, towers, and domes; but rather a new sublimity that lies in majesty of mass, in aspiring lines against the upper sky, in the brilliancy of color, in the mystery of fields of shadow, in the splendor of fields of light,—above all in the suggested power and energy of New York life.

This is all uniquely western, if you please, and those



who visit us from Europe rather smile at it as men have done at all new things from time immemorial; but at least they come to see the new city and some day they may remain to praise it. One thing is certain, it cannot be ignored. It has too much character for that.



THE APPROACH FROM THE SEA





PL. II BATTERY PARK NEAR BOWLING GREEN

PL II BATTERY FARE NEAR FOWLING GREEN







## CHAPTER II

### THE APPROACH FROM THE SEA

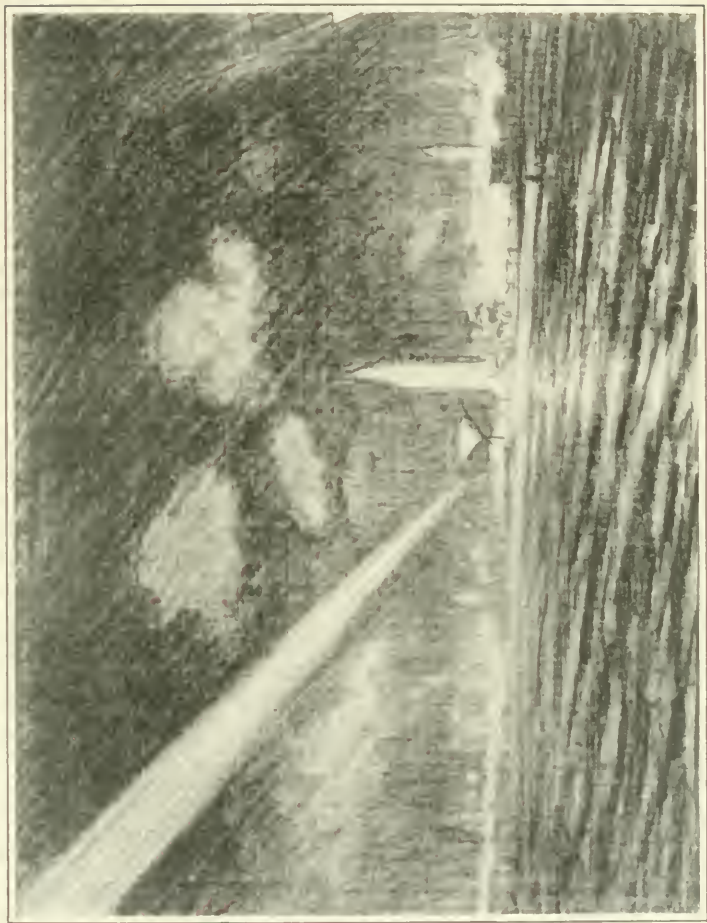
AFTER the rain and fog of London, after six or seven days of knocking about on an ocean liner in wet September weather, how welcome to the homeward-bound traveller is the glimpse of American sunlight that perhaps comes to him off Nantucket. It is not European sunlight. It seems brighter, more sparkling, more luminous. The sky, too, is higher, arches into a loftier dome, shows a finer, paler quality of blue; while the clouds are different from any seen north of the Alps. In the late afternoon great heaps of cumulus lift in pink turrets and towers along the southern horizon, thin veils of stratus are drawn across their sunlit tops, and high above them, white as snow, gleam the feathery forms of the cirrus. It seems a fairy cloudland illuminated by a silver sun.

The first exclamation of the stranger in America is over the sunlight and the sky. New York is a thousand miles south, two thousand miles west, of London, and its light has a clean clear quality about it that is impressive. But no one exclaims over the first glimpse of American land. The ship's company looks at it list-

lessly, for it is only a flat strip of dull yellow, lying low down upon the water to the north, with occasionally a dimly seen lighthouse rising from it. Almost any land in the world — England, France, Spain, Mexico, Peru — lifts out of the sea with a more commanding relief than America at the approach to New York Bay. The cliffs of Cornwall or the Pillars of Hercules one can grow enthusiastic over; but the sand spits of Long Island or New Jersey make no impression — except, of course, upon the returning native.

Even the hills of Navesink and Sandy Hook, with its smartly painted buildings, are somehow passed by in silence. No one comments or grows emotional over them. But when Swinburne and Hoffman islands and the shores of Staten Island rise into prominence, there is a visible interest stirred throughout the ship. The pent-up steerage crowds against the rail and chatters excitedly; and even the complacent first-cabin ventures a few remarks on the green grass, the bright-colored houses, the warm sky.

As the ship moves up into the Narrows, passing in the distance the white towers of Coney Island and close at hand the green and gray of Fort Tompkins and Fort Hamilton, the interest spreads. The rails above and below are manned with peering people. The houses, the gardens, the trees, the flowers of Staten Island are almost within stone-throwing distance; and they all look



PL. 5. — CONEY ISLAND FROM THE BAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO  
LIBRARY

so preternaturally bright and beautiful that many adjectives are forthcoming. Even the not-too-observant foreigner begins to notice the sparkle of light on the water, the clearness of the air, the variety of the foliage, the gayety of the coloring.

Presently the vibration of the vessel ceases, but the ship still moves with her own impetus slowly up into the quarantine grounds. Tugs and yachts and small boats gather about her, like fisher folk around a stranded whale; but they do not try to board her. The tug coming out from the shore flying a yellow flag carries the health officer of the port; and he must make his inspection before any one is allowed to go on board. Once more the port rail is crowded with heads protruding to get a glimpse of the great man coming up the ship's ladder. How very small he looks and what a long way down he is! The monster proportions of the ship tend to dwarf everything about her — people and tugs, trees and houses, hills on the shore and distances on the water. From the thin air and the clear light one is led to believe that a conversation could be carried on with the people on the Staten Island shore; but they are something over half a mile away. And from the name "The Narrows," given to the strait through which the ship has just come, one might gather the impression that it is really a narrow strip of water, whereas it is a mile wide.

The medical inspection is soon through with, people

from tugs and yachts and steamboats begin to climb up the vessel's side, sending and receiving shouts of recognition from expectant friends. Perhaps an excursion steamer comes hurrying down the bay with a band of music, flying flags, and several hundred cheering throats to welcome home some congressman or senator whose greatness the ship's company had not suspected until now. Once more the ship gets under way and steams into the Upper Bay. Everybody is now on the alert. The shores are beginning to show many docks, factories, warehouses, elevators, all the queer buildings to be found about the entrance of a great harbor; the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island rises in huge proportions; and presently there is a hum that runs along the ship and all eyes are set and staring dead ahead, up the bay.

Slowly, as the vessel turns on her course, the towering sky-scrapers of lower New York, and the spider-web tracery of the Brooklyn Bridge come into view. Faint and far the city lies, like a distant sierra. Nothing is distinct as yet. It is only a suggestion, but, like Mont Blanc seen from Geneva, what a sense of height it gives one! It is not a city on a hill gaining grandeur from its elevated position; on the contrary it rises almost sheer from the water's edge, — almost like Venice from her lagoon islands. No one who has come up to Venice by water in the evening light is likely to forget the loveliness of that city by the sea with its fairy palaces lifting out

of the blue-green tide, its high silver domes of the Salute, its lofty campanili, its wondrous color. It is one of the sights of the world. But New York is all dome, all campanile, all towering splendor as you see it from the Upper Bay; and it has an even greater wealth of color than Venice, a sharper light, a more luminous shadow. It will not stand close analysis so well as the City of the Doges; but at a distance it is superbly picturesque, grandly beautiful.

With this far city in view and the mind groping at its proportions, trying to imagine its height and girth, the steamer, once more, begins to look small; the Statue of Liberty seems rather like an ordinary statue; even the Upper Bay after the open ocean, seems cramped, shut in. The stranger does not quite understand it. He has to be told over again that the statue on the island stands a hundred and fifty feet above its pedestal, being the largest (and about the worst) of its kind in the world; that the Upper Bay is five miles wide by five or six long, that the ship has been travelling a dozen miles through land-locked waters, and that New York in the distance is still some miles away. Figures are frequently wearisome, if not something of a nuisance; but they are, nevertheless, quite convincing to the sceptical, and absolutely indispensable to the exotic American.

Gowanus Bay and the lower end of Brooklyn, Bayonne and the lower end of Jersey City, are passed quite un-



noticed by the passengers. Things of a more immediate interest are claiming the attention. Outward-bound steamers are passing with flags flying and handkerchiefs waving, huge full-rigged ships, riding high out of water, are being towed down and out to sea, barks and brigs and coasting schooners are following after, and lumbering in the rear come spiteful little tugs wrenching at long rows of garbage scows, or hustling along oil lighters, or snorting about dredgers or elevator boats. Everything whistles at you as it passes, by way of salutation; and perhaps the white yacht that is along-side escorting the steamer up to her dock, gives a sharp shriek in return. Meantime the distant city grows in size, lifts higher, seems to peer through its blue atmosphere; while over it, over the harbor and over the bay, the clear September sunlight is falling, dancing, flashing from dome and lofty window and wave facet, wringing color out of every ferry-boat, tug, building, greensward, and scrap of foliage within the great panorama.

When Governor's Island, with its round little fort, and the Battery, with its charming spot of green, are reached, some of the details of the tall buildings begin to reveal themselves. The outliers facing on Battery Park can be seen from foundation wall to roof line, and counted, in twenty or more stories, by the mounting windows. But these are only the foot-hills. Further back and lifting higher are the central peaks, the main sierras.





PL. 6.—CROSSING FERRIES

17

1

2

3

4

5



The architectural wonders of the world seem insignificant when measured by their scale. The sky line of London, for instance, is cut by church domes and steeples that look down on the low-lying town; but the highest church steeple here is that of Old Trinity, two hundred and eighty-four feet in height, which fails to rise into sight. It is submerged by its surroundings, with the Singer Tower in the lead six hundred and thirty-five feet up in the air. Such structures are appropriately enough called "sky-scrapers." The tops of them reach into the blue, cut into it, seem to "scrape" against it. Almost everyone is impressed or startled or outraged by the first sight of them. Even the visiting foreigner finds his lively expectation outdone by the reality.

Up into the North River the black muzzle of the steamer points, holding her way amid increasing numbers of tugs, ferry-boats, brick schooners, oil lighters and ear barges. Gradually the bunched appearance of the tall buildings begins to change. The group partially disintegrates, certain of the taller peaks draw off and stand alone, the lower city begins to show its profile. This is the view of the city that Mr. Henry James describes as like "some colossal hair comb turned upward, and so deprived of half its teeth that the others, at their uneven intervals, count doubly as sharp spikes." The simile has a modicum of truth about it. The want of

teeth here and there shows that the growth is not complete, that the city is still in a building stage; but that the present sky-line is unattractive can hardly be admitted. On the contrary, if seen late in the afternoon when the great foundation walls are sunk in shadow, when the sun is setting over New Jersey and its yellow light flushes the tops of the high buildings and turns the window-panes to flaming fire, this profile view of the lower city is magnificently grand. There never was quite such a mountain barrier made by human hands and stretched along the eastern sky at sunset. Even in the full light of noonday, with dark shadows flung down the great walls and high lights leaping from cornice to gilded dome, or at dusk when each house of many thousand electric lights has its windows illuminated, there is still a grandeur of mass, of light, of color, that is most imposing. That there is incongruity, want of proportion, want of Greek harmony about it, is quite true. But perhaps even so severe a critic as Mr. James will admit that the problem of New York to-day is quite different from the problem of Athens in Periclean times. Athens, or at least the beautiful part of it, was built to gratify the vanity of the Athenians; New York has been built to handle the commerce of the western world.

Commerce, travel, traffic, seem to proclaim themselves from every craft that floats in the harbor and from all the docks along the shores. The impulsive ferry-boats,

carrying their thousands of commuters to or from New Jersey, keep darting back and forth from their slips, impudently challenging our great liner with short, hoarse whistles that indicate they mean to cross our bows. They have to "make a train" and are not to be stopped. Long scows loaded with freight-cars are being shoved and pushed around the Battery and up to Mott Haven, where the cars are transferred to New England railway tracks; pile-drivers in tow go staggering up the river to the new docks in process of building; great strings of canal boats, half a dozen long and three abreast, are trailing away toward Raritan Bay; coal barges in squadrons keep filing past. Everything is moving in the interest of commerce.

Much of this commercial show, in scale and value, falls far short of the imposing row of office buildings staked out from the Battery to the Plaza. Enough of it is petty or mean-looking, as, for instance, the rows and rows of pile-docks with long ramshackle pier-sheds upon them. True, they serve their purpose fairly well. With the necessities for many and quick landings the wooden dock that gives instead of breaking with the blow is better than the stone dock that might crush or bend the plates of a vessel; but not even a very "good American" will argue that they are better-looking and make a finer appearance than the stone ones. If the truth were told the wooden piers are a shabby, poverty-stricken,

and patched border for so wealthy a city to be wearing on its outer garment. They contrast sharply with the huge steamers, the colossal bridges, and the high towers of the sky-scrappers—the first contrast perhaps to catch the eye of the visitor.

To be sure, one soon forgets or fails to see these discordant items. There is such a bewildering rush at every one of the senses as the steamer moves up past the Courtlandt Street ferry-slip, that the forlorn docks and the dirty scows are relegated to the background. Color asserts itself. It blares from the many-hued pier-sheds, from the white and gold excursion steamers, from the red and cream colored funnels of the ocean liners, from the magenta ferry-boats, from the terra-cotta, brick, and stone buildings. It is too near for any large unity or harmony. It comes in patches with some sharpness of impact, and is at first (perhaps by contrast with the dull blue and green of northern Europe) somewhat gay, but agreeably so. There is a stimulus, a tonic effect about it that gives intimation of the intensity of life that prevails in the city and the harbor. It is not the deep half-tone, the broken hue, the dull morbid color indicative of decay; on the contrary, it has clearness, even sharpness in it, and comes to you like the clarion call of a trumpet.

And the noise! The shrieks of passing steamers, the discordant notes of harbor craft, the puffing and wheezing of tugs, the din of escaping steam, clanging bells,

howling men are in the air. The deck rails of the steamer are manned, and all the passengers above and below are in a buzz of excitement, a roar of noise. The end of the pier and the windows of the pier-shed are bulging with expectant friends, eagerly awaiting the docking of the big liner, and all making a noise again. Flags are flying, handkerchiefs are waving, everybody is talking, a large proportion is shouting.

The warping-in process, slowly effected by the aid of tugs and windlasses, is accompanied by volleys of recognitions sent to the steamer from the dock, and returned in kind. And such a kind! The manner in which the language is mangled, to say nothing of the idioms interpolated, gives one quite a shock. Such a beautiful bay and harbor, such wonderful sunlight and color, such a marvel of a city in its making; but what abominable voices, and what atrocious grammar! You know that the ungrammatical and the slangy are always in evidence on such occasions, and that the well-bred majority is quiet and unobtrusive; but, nevertheless, it gives you a queer feeling. It is another one of the contrasts.

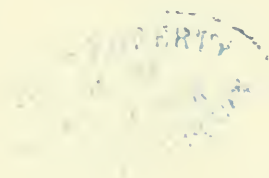
And are those yellow-faced, unkempt, ill-dressed stevedores who are sagging heavily over the gang-planks the typical workmen of New York? Is that howling mass, waving its arms and parasols in the background, representative of the city's upper classes? Not neces-

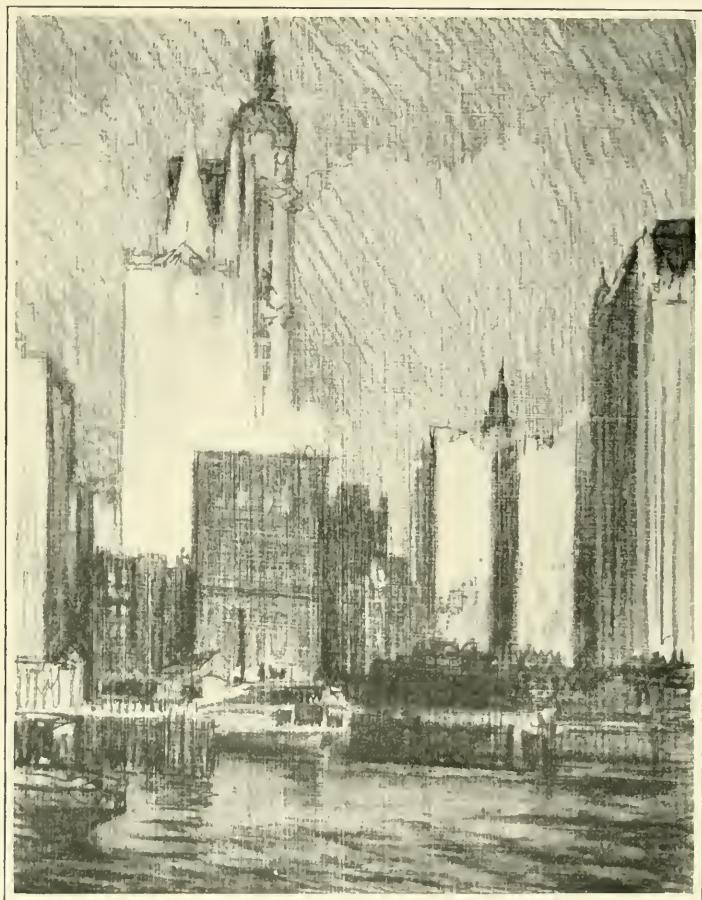


sarily. A mob is a mob anywhere, and is usually gathered together for the purpose of doing those things in company that the individual would be ashamed to do alone. Not that there is anything reprehensible about the crowd that gathers to welcome an ocean-steamer, but, good American that you are, you wish it were not quite so demonstrative, not quite so "loud." You have misgivings that perhaps your foreign acquaintance on the steamer will accept these people as typical of the soil, and you have a notion that the real American is somewhat more refined, more dignified than these; in fact, not very different from any other educated person. To be quite frank, you are somewhat taken aback to find so many of your countrymen not so high up socially or intellectually as the blue sky or even a down-town skyscraper.

The gang-planks are in place and the rush to get ashore begins. There is no cause for hurry, because the baggage has to be taken off and examined before people can leave the pier; but that does not give anyone pause. To see the scrambling mass moving along the gang-planks one might think the ship afire, and everyone anxious to quit it in the shortest possible time. Off they surge, bonnets and bags and umbrellas, new clothes, top hats, and alpenstocks, dogs, maids, and stewards, each one pushing and hustling his neighbor, but good-natured about it, smiling, laughing, all of them delighted to get ashore.







PL. 7. -- DOCKS AND SLIPS

In half an hour the whole ship's company is within the pier-shed getting bags and boxes together for the customs examination. Everybody is moving, gesticulating, calling, perspiring. Passengers and their friends, with stewards, telegraph boys, customs officers, policemen, expressmen, are swirling about like so much flotsam. It looks like a mad mob, but there is a method in the madness. The moment one's boxes are together a special officer can be obtained to examine them. A landing card is presented at the desk of the chief and he immediately details a subordinate to accompany you. None of them takes off a cap. Your officer may nod a "Good morning!" but it is very perfunctory. He wants to know at once where your baggage is, and if it is all together in one place. Then the trouble begins.

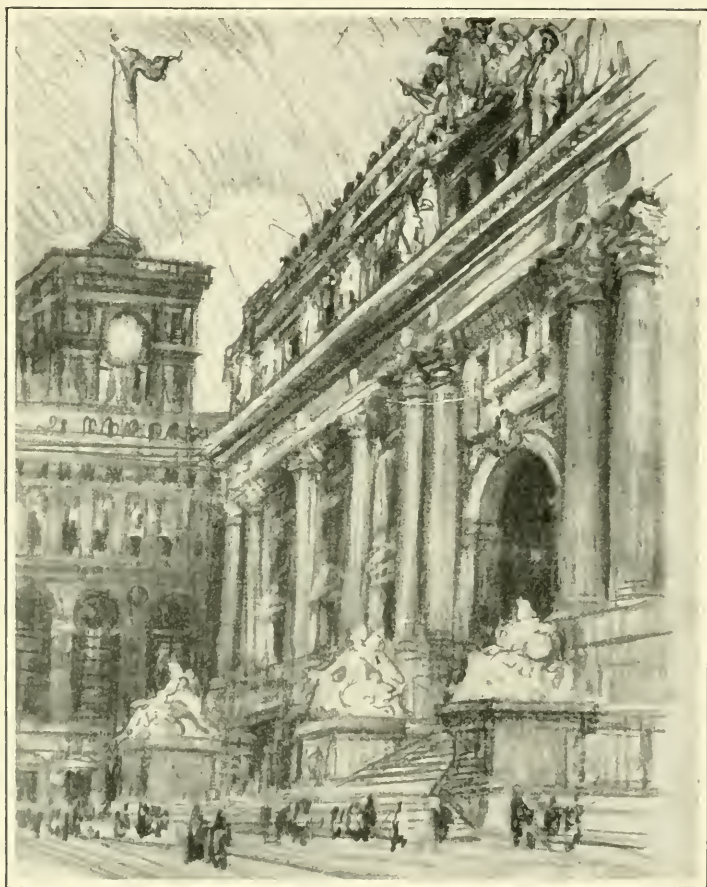
That is, trouble *may* begin if one tries to dodge questions or hide anything, or even has a suspicious look. If one knows no guile he need fear no evil. For the average customs officer has no malice prepense. He is anxious to get through with the examination and get you and your bags off the premises; but he has heard somewhat about the path of duty being the path of glory; and, besides — a plain-clothes inspector may be watching him. At any rate, it will be necessary to open up those "few presents" and show the bottom of things. Perhaps when he has finished there is nothing but bottom left and most of your apparel is scattered about on the dock; and then again

it is possible that you will be passed on as pleasantly, with withers unwrung, as though in England or in France.

But the ordeal is through with and help is at hand. Ununiformed, unlicensed, unnumbered porters offer to aid in restoring the lost equilibrium. The belongings are put back, squeezed in, trampled into place, and the bags locked and strapped. Then the porter trundles them down toward the street entrance of the long dock and, incidentally, stops in the vicinity of carriage agents and cabmen. A bargain is struck for a conveyance. The price is of an exalted sky-scraping nature, but it is not the proper time to quarrel with cabmen. They know it, and charge according to their knowledge. Neither is it the place to get the best cab accommodations. The horses are street-car derelicts, the harness gives evidence of disintegration, the carriage and the shabby unshaven driver are usually the worse for wear.

One resolves not to be bothered by such small matters. The frayed lining of a coach is not to influence your opinion about your native town. A look out of the carriage window (or over it, for there is no glass left in it) is pleasanter and more philosophical. Alas! the view without is quite as bad as the look within. West Street is crowded with trucks, drays, carts, cabs, cars, trolleys that tangle into knots and bunches and then somehow untangle; the pavement is broken by car tracks and an occasional hole into which wheels drop with a thud and come out with a

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO  
LIBRARY



PL. 8—NEW YORK CUSTOM HOUSE

jerk; the dingy, battered-looking buildings that line the east side of the street, the cheap and gaudy signs, the barrel skids across the sidewalks, the lampless lamp posts, the garbage cans, the stained awnings, are all somewhat disturbing. And the roar and rattle and clang that seem to accompany the movements of that mob of humanity! Was there ever such a din known to men, since the walls of Jericho fell down?

Once out of the West Street maelstrom the carriage, perhaps, slips into a long, narrow side street, made up of many four-story buildings, all quite alike, and all apparently inhabited by people who rub unclean hands on doors, walls, and shutters, and do not bother about washing either the windows or themselves. Dull-looking women sit on the low stoops and survey the street in which dirty children are playing, often in connection with standing drays or ash barrels or coal heaps. As for the street itself, it is perhaps a series of Belgian block bumps, with an occasional break-away into asphalt. Wherever it crosses another street or avenue there are double car tracks with the clanging gongs of surface cars, and perhaps overhead the rattle and roar of a rusty-looking elevated railway.

There is no cessation of clatter, and apparently no end to the mean buildings that line the way. Tenements, factories, shops, saloons, — whatever they are or are not, — at least just here they hold the record for uniform rectan-



gular meanness. It is a little shocking the way all this is driven in upon one after some months in Paris or London. Perhaps you have ignored it, if not denied it, many a time in speaking of New York over there in Europe; and, true enough, there is some improvement over earlier days; but who could imagine it was still so bad! Yet this is the West Side of the city; the East Side is perhaps worse. You begin to wonder about the narrow strip of comparative decency running up Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, and Broadway. Perhaps in your absence even that has become submerged beneath the high waves of immigration.

Gradually the buildings grow larger and more important, the streets cleaner and more filled with people, the vehicles more numerous, the noise more insistent. Apartment houses begin to rise, shops and stores develop imposing show-windows, cars are coming and going, crowds are circulating in strings and knots. Presently the carriage rattles into Broadway and the shabby but unabashed driver begins edging his way across it, with one eye on the autoeratic policeman who stands in the center of the street and regulates traffic. Through and across that net-work of cars and people the route lies down a clean asphalt street to Fifth Avenue, and in a few moments your dilapidated trap brings up with a flourish of whip, in front of perhaps the most ornate hotel in the world.



Carriages in plush and velvet, ladies in silks and satins, flunkies and footmen in lacings and facings, pages in gloves and buttons, blend in a gorgeous confusion about the entrances. Within there are glimpses of marble and gilding, Oriental rugs and portières, visitors in gay hats and marvelous costumes, smartly dressed men, hurrying porters, telegraph boys, call boys. An air of luxury and wealth, not to say riotous extravagance, seems to exude from every opening in the building. Around it are colossal structures in stone and marble, along the avenue is a great moving throng in carriages and on foot, close at hand gorgeous shop-windows catch the eye, in the distance towering Flatirons lose themselves in pale outlines, over all there is an unceasing roar and honk and whistle, and far above is the serene blue of the Americansky.

There is nothing strikingly new about this. The New Yorker has known it, known the squalor and known the magnificence, for a long time; and yet each year as he returns from Europe the sharp contrast is brought home to him more violently. In a few days he will accept it, without further thinking, as he has done many times before; but he knows, nevertheless, that it is there. And how there, why there, in this chief city of the great republic? Is democracy merely a name? And is this newly established aristocracy of wealth more dominant, more arrogant, more despotic, than the old aristocracy of birth and rank?

Fortunately, those questions do not have to be answered immediately. The stranger in New York is at first more given to the exclamation than the interrogation, and as for the returned native he is perhaps momentarily dazed by the splendor and the meanness of his own town. Besides, concise and final answers are not to be accepted regarding places and people in America. Many problems are still in process of solution. Not even the Americans themselves know precisely how they will come out.

## SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS





PL. III. WASHINGTON SQUARE









## CHAPTER III

### SEASONAL IMPRESSIONS

WHAT is so gay as a day in New York, especially if it be in October! The city is perhaps seen at its best during that month. The inhabitants, returned from their summer vacations, have a brightness and an alertness about them, they step along the streets energetically as though in good health and spirits, and they pass the time of day with cordiality, even vivacity. Business enterprises of the winter have started (or at least one thinks they have though they are going on always); summer changes have perhaps been made; there is apparently a newness and a smartness about the streets and shops and moving wheels.

Above all it is the season of light which may possibly account for some of the smart look of things. The skies are clear, the air is warm, and the sunlight falls perhaps for many days without clouds or rain. It is just ordinary Atlantic Coast sunshine, and dull enough compared with that of the table-lands of Wyoming or the deserts of Arizona or the sierras of Old Mexico; but by contrast with London light — London where the sun seen through smoke

so often looks like a hot copper cent — it is really quite wonderful. New Yorkers have a way of boasting about it as though it were something of their own manufacture (which suggests the inclusive mind); but, nevertheless, it should be put down to their credit that they have tried to preserve it by prohibiting the use of soft coal within the city limits.

Perhaps as a result of the soft-coal prohibition New York is a clean city. Not always clean underfoot. In a democratic city where the streets belong to everyone to use and to no one to keep clean, where men traffic and team and are always in a hurry, it is impossible to prevent accumulations of litter. During the summer months it takes no herculean effort to keep the streets decently swept; but in winter, with much ice and snow, and a limited and unreliable labor supply, the difficulty is greatly increased. London or Paris perhaps does that sort of thing better than New York, because it has better facilities for doing it; but, nevertheless, New York is, all told, the cleaner city. Paris is gray with dust and London grimy with soot, but the buildings of New York are as bright almost as the day they were erected. Look up at the clean walls, windows, and cornices! How newly washed seem the chimneys, towers, and domes! The roofs, when you see them from the upper story of some sky-scraper, have a scrubbed look about them; and even the trees in the larger parks, for all that pipes are harrying



PL. 9. THE FLATIRON (FULLER BUILDING)



their roots and gases their branches, have a brightness quite unknown to the somber growths of Hyde Park or the Champs Elysées.

And how the color does crop out at every turn — is brought out perhaps with some extra sharpness because of the clear light! Everything shows color. And seldom do you find the same tone repeated. The buildings alongside of which run the elevated roads from the Battery to the Harlem River, are often alike in structure but seldom in hue. They differ each from the other by a tone or a shade. Stone, brick, cement, terra-cotta — no one could name or count the hundreds or even thousands of different tints or shades they show. To the unobservant the high mass of the Flatiron, the spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Diana's Tower of the Madison Square Garden are alike in hues; but neither in local color nor in texture are they the same. When the straight shafts of sunset are striking them and the light upon them is reflected, the hues may be in one saffron, in another pink, in the third salmon-colored. Just so the morning sun falling upon the tall towers of the Brooklyn Bridge leaves a different stain from that upon the turrets of the Park Row Building or the great glass walls of the Singer Tower.

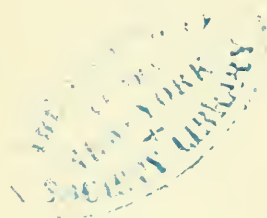
Everywhere one goes, up or down the city, this prodigality of color shows. Sometimes it appears in large patches like the red mass of the Produce Exchange, the

gray mass of the sky-scrapers at Fifty-Fifth Street and Fifth Avenue, or the green mass of the Central Park; but more often the coloring is in spots here and there, and counts only as variation in the prevailing note. For there is a prevailing note, a blend in this riot of hues. It requires distance, however, to see it. Close to view many of the colors in houses, signs, vehicles, costumes, fly at you rabidly, and are perhaps so intense that you turn away with dazed eyes only to see the complementary color in the very next object. Under the bright October sun every hue jumps to its highest pitch and apparently every shadow sinks to its lowest depth. The effect is violent.

But October with its bright light and high color has also its lilac or purple haze that blends all colors into one tone and makes of many pieces a pictorial unity. The haze does not belong exclusively to the woodlands, though in the Central Park it lurks along the driveways, rests upon the Mall, and floods in and out among the trees and rocks and flowers; while beyond Riverside Drive it hangs above the Hudson, shrouding and yet revealing the distant Palisades. It is also to be seen almost any day as one stands at the top of Murray Hill and looks down Fifth Avenue toward Madison Square. It fills the whole lower avenue, surrounds the towers and steeples and cornices, and draws its mauve-hued veiling across the sharp prow of the distant Flatiron, making of that



PL. 10. — NEW YORK IN RAIN (PARK AVENUE)





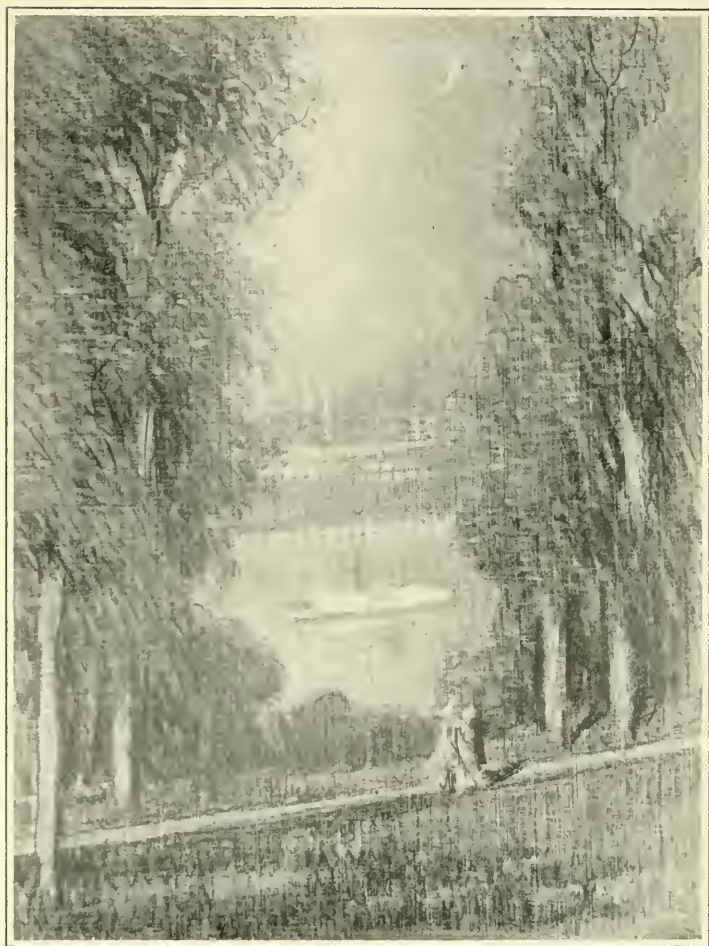
much maligned structure a thing of beauty. It is not different in the streets of the lower city. Neither here nor there does the dust of traffic rising from the streets obliterate or obscure it. On the contrary, the more dust and automobile smoke, the heavier is the atmosphere, and the more perfect the *ensemble*.

New York is seldom free from a haze or mist of some sort. But it is a very thin veiling compared with that produced by the moisture and smoke of London. So it is that the Londoner within our gates is almost continuously out of focus. He complains of "loud" colors, wonders at the absence of aërial perspective, and thinks it all signifies and symbolizes our crude civilization; whereas, it may merely suggest that he himself has not yet acquired a comprehensive point of view. He is perhaps looking at objects and colors in detail rather than in their relationship. Seen as one should look at a Monet landscape, for instance, the city is a marvel of color and light. That is its distinct and positive beauty. Of course, it is somewhat shocking to keep reiterating this, since we have all been reared in the belief that civic beauty lies in classic buildings, in roof lines, in squares, ovals, statuary, and the like; yet the heretical still insist that beauty may be in such intangible evanescent features as color, light, and air, with arches, columns, and towers little more than the catch points of perspective — the objects upon which light and color play.

This lilac or purple haze of October may run through November and December, with day following day of sunshine, and the winter come late to the city. It is not an unusual experience. Yet as January comes in, the nights and days are decidedly colder and the autumn haze has perhaps shifted into a pale blue. The air seems thinner, sharper, more eager; and the tops of the tall buildings lift out of the dust of the street into clearer and brighter regions. All the roof and tower and cupola gew-gaws seem to sparkle in the sun, the drifts of steam from the hotels and high apartment houses are dazzling white, down in the street people in heavy coats hurry by, and cabbies and flunkies in bear-skins sit on their boxes looking preternaturally red in the face.

At times it can be very cold in the city with its touch of the salt sea in the air — far colder than in the country, notwithstanding the popular belief to the contrary. The steel buildings, the blocks and blocks of stone, brick, and cement, the flagstone sidewalks, are receivers and retainers of cold rather than of heat. In the forest in winter a wood road will be warmer than the open, but in the city a steel-and-stone street, swept by the wind, may be colder than the wind itself. And how the wind can blow through the city streets! The tall buildings seem to catch it on their upper walls and spill it like a sail down into the thoroughfares, where it moves in violent twists and spirals. The foot-passengers in the

1875  
1876  
1877  
1878  
1879



PL. 11. — FORT LEE IN HAZE

neighborhood of the Flatiron sometimes have unpleasant experiences with it; and farther up-town, though Society on the inside of a brougham goes through the Plaza to the Park with unruffled feathers, yet the man on the box has to "hold fast." It is the same story in the lower city. People worry along the streets with their heads down, holding their hats with a firm grip; the peddlers and newsboys creep into the great doorways and stamp their feet; and the big truck horses go by with steaming breath and waving manes.

In freezing weather there can be no water used on the streets, and the dust accompaniment to the high wind can be readily imagined. It sometimes blows in small clouds to the infinite disgust of everyone. There is nothing to do about it except to get indoors and watch, through the windows, the pavement swept smooth in spots and heaped with eddies of dust in other places. Fortunately such days are few. They are not pleasant — no, not even in New York — though there may be some consolation in thinking that they occur in other cities (Vienna and Rome, for instance) quite as often as here. It is even charged that Chicago, with its appellation of "the Windy City," goes beyond New York in this respect — something which every New Yorker is too modest to deny.

Inevitably comes the snow; and that in a city is always regarded as something of a misfortune. Up in the

Central Park and along Riverside Drive it looks very beautiful. The children, the skaters, and the coasters, with those who have horses and sleighs, enjoy it, and people who have offices up aloft in the sky-scraper and see it flying past the windows in great gusts and clouds are sometimes elated by it; but down in the street where it falls and lodges it is neither inspiring nor welcome. It mingles with the dust, is churned dirty by hoofs and wheels, and, if it melts, soon makes a slush underfoot. The surface cars with their electric brooms push it into the gutters, the "white wings" of the street-cleaning department heap it into huge mounds for carriages and trucks to wallow through and break down again, and carts work at it for days and weeks trying to get it away to the docks and so into the rivers. A week after a heavy snow-fall a dozen or more of the principal streets may be clear, but the side streets have barricades of snow along their curb lines perhaps for a month or more. Nothing but a warm rain and a spring sun clears up the thoroughfares effectively. In the meantime, through January and February and into March, with the alternations of temperature, the snow melts and freezes, making the cross-walks and streets disagreeable and occasionally quite impossible.

And rain! It does not rain every day or every week by any means, but when the wind comes out of the east, the storm clouds are almost always following close upon





PL. 12.—LOWER CITY IN MIST



its heels. Then the signs and weather-vanes and windows of the city creak and rattle in the wind, and the pipes and gutters gurgle with the rain. If it follow cold weather perhaps the rain freezes as it falls, coating with ice the pavements and stoops of the houses, the high sides of the sky-scraper, the tall masts of the shipping in the rivers. The huge suspension bridges turn into fairy creations of spun glass, the trees in the parks glitter like old-fashioned chandeliers; while down in the streets horses slip and motors slide and the pedestrian has difficulty in keeping his feet. As the rain continues the ice gradually melts, the trolley wheels buzz and sputter electricity, the elevated roads spit long sparks of blue light from the third rail, the carriages go by with a splash, and the rubber-shod, rubber-coated cab horse slowly pounds out a hollow clop-clop, clop-clop, clop-clop.

Perhaps a night and a day and a night the rain falls in waving sheets that slash against the high windows of the office buildings, and break into water-dust against turret and tower. The streets are flooded, the tide-water, driven in by the wind, is up to its highest pitch, the cellars along West Street are drowned out, and every pipe is working overtime in getting rid of the flood. Gradually all the dirty snow of many weeks' accumulation seems to slip from the turtle back of the island and slide toward one or the other of the rivers. The city is washed clean. Before morning the wind shifts into the

south, the clouds break; and when the sun comes up perhaps New York awakes to find that spring has arrived overnight.

Spring apparently comes earlier to the city than to the country. The small parks shut in by high buildings, and thus protected in measure from the winds, respond quickly to the first warm sun. Even in the Central Park the grass shows green in the little swales a week before it starts into life up in Westchester, and the stems of the maple put on a ruddy glow some days sooner than over in New Jersey. Around the southern slopes of the rocks the crocuses and dandelions push up, and in the lowlands pussy willows begin to burst with impatience. Nature turns uneasily in her sleep in the early days of March for all that there may be some patches of snow still lying in the hollows. The bluebirds and song sparrows come back by ones and twos and threes, and the blackbirds and robins in flocks, to add to the sense of stirring life. New York itself seems to emerge as from a bath with a cleaner and fresher aspect.

The cold blue haze of winter is now seldom seen. In its place there is a warm, silver-gray atmosphere that is more apparent, more of an envelope, more of a harmonizer of local hues. It seems to come out of the moist ground, out of the rivers, out of the harbors, and is possibly the residuum of spring mists and dews. The days of March and April are not wanting in sunshine,

yet they also bring gray clouds and falling rain. The rain is welcomed in the parks, along the driveways, and in the less cleanly portions of the city. And it is interesting to watch as it falls into the streets, or is seen in bright diagonal lines against the tall buildings, or splashes into the rivers and makes a bubbling surface, or hangs like a fringed mantle over the Palisades, over Brooklyn Heights, over the hills of Staten Island. How very beautiful the high ridge of sky-scrapers looks shrouded in that silver-gray mist, their tops half-disappearing in the upper blend of rain and clouds, and around their bases the docks and shipping half-emerging from the lower mists! What wonderful patterns, what mysterious appearances, these high buildings take upon themselves with their masses of light and dark floating in the heavy atmosphere of rain!

When the sky clears, the blue seems more intense than ever, the white clouds are dazzling in light and perhaps heaped into enormous mounds of cumulus; and the sunlight falls clear and bright on the white walls of the Metropolitan Tower, and upon Diana of the Bended Bow above the Madison Square Garden. The long wet streets steam in the sun, the soaked trees in the parks steam, even the wet cab horses, as they jog by, steam too. Gradually the city dries out, returning to its normal condition; but the Flatiron, which acts as a barometer for the people passing on upper Fifth Avenue, indicates

that there is still considerable humidity in the air. A gray mist surrounds it. The time has come for jonquils and tulips in Union Square, and spring in New York is not very different from spring elsewhere.

Gradually, and quite imperceptibly, the season slips on. The cumulus clouds heap higher and higher along the southern horizon, the grass turns a summer green down at the Battery, the trees break into full leaf up in the parks. The flower shops along the avenues are overflowing upon the sidewalks with bursting beauty; the East Side fire-escapes in spots are green and white and yellow with plants growing in cans; and up toward the Bronx and Pelham Bay, over in the borough of Queens, down on the hills of Staten Island, the wild flowers grow in the fields and woods, just as they did in the days when Peter Minuit bought the island of Manhattan from the Indians for sixty guilders, payable in goods of Dutch manufacture.

And so the summer comes in — is ushered in usually about the middle of June by three or four days of heat. If accompanied by moisture in the air, its results are somewhat disturbing. The newspapers print lists of the heat prostrations, and the reporters delight in picturing the horrors of the hot wave with that wealth of adjective and height of caption peculiar to modern journalism. But the dangers are somewhat exaggerated. Those who use ordinary precautions are in no peril. As for the quality of the heat, it is not different from that which

occasionally visits Paris or Berlin or Vienna. Still, it is not to be denied that in New York men and horses do drop here and there when the mercury mounts very high; and those who do not drop are not having the most enjoyable time of their lives. Hot weather in New York is not more defensible than elsewhere, and those who can do so generally leave the city behind them in the summer season.

But if the city is not so pleasant in July as in November, it is often more beautiful. Heat brings out color in its richest tints. The blue and the gray hazes disappear, and now the distant Flatiron, seen down Fifth Avenue, seems to float in a rosy atmosphere. During the long summer afternoons the high sky above it shows a pallid blue suffused with pink. Warm colors are in the clouds, and are reflected from the white buildings, the tall towers, the harbor waters, even from the roadways and drive-ways along the rivers.

It is on such summer evenings as these, when the western sky is flushed with hot hues, that the spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral, seen from Sixth Avenue, take on pink and red and yellow tones; and the high tower of the Times Building runs from a red glow at sunset through pink, mauve, and lilac, until, with twilight gone, it settles into a blue that belongs exclusively to the summer night. These are the evenings, too, for the skyscrapers of the lower town to light up with strange hues

along their peaks, and reflect fiery lights from their countless windows. The sun is a wonderful alchemist, and it works as busily and as potently on the face wall of a sky-scraper as on the canyon walls of the Colorado or the snow caps of Monte Rosa.

Unfortunately, the hurrying New Yorker is not in a mood to enjoy these summer color-changes. He is disturbed in his comfort, he fumes and frets; and as a result, he exaggerates both the heat and his own condition. He is not "roasted" or "melted," as he writes the family. In reality he often has a cooler and pleasanter summer in town than the family sojourning in a box of a hotel in the mountains or by the sea-shore. His house is usually large and airy, his office is high up in the region of the winds, and he has a thick-walled club where he seeks refuge in the evenings. With the huddled and packed crowds on the East Side it is somewhat different. They never go away, never get a vacation of any kind, except for a day on a recreation pier or on an excursion steamer down the bay; they have neither cool houses nor breezy offices. During the hot weather they live in the street, sleep on the roofs, and endure the heat in silence. They suffer without doubt, and yet their miseries cannot be put down solely to the climate. People when "cabined, cribbed, confined," cannot be very happy or comfortable though the bending skies above be those of Olympus.

Aside from the very rich and the very poor there are the many thousands of neither high nor low degree, who endure the dog-days in the city, in shop and factory and office, perspiring and grumbling perhaps, but neither fainting nor faltering. By day they move along the shady side of the street, and by night they haunt some roof-garden or open-air vaudeville; or perhaps sit quietly on park benches watching the water play in the fountains, or the gentle swaying of the tree branches in the warm air, or the dark purple shadows of the foliage cast on the pavements by the electric lights.

The various conditions of humanity, each in its own way, manage to live through the seasons as they come and go. Of course New York has its many shortcomings and does not lack for the knowledge thereof. It is charged with this, and indicted for that, and condemned for the other thing. But its climate is neither a failure nor a crime. It is merely a series of contrasts, like so many other things that one meets with in and about the city.





THE STREETS IN THE MORNING











PL. IV. — THE PLAZA

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STREETS IN THE MORNING

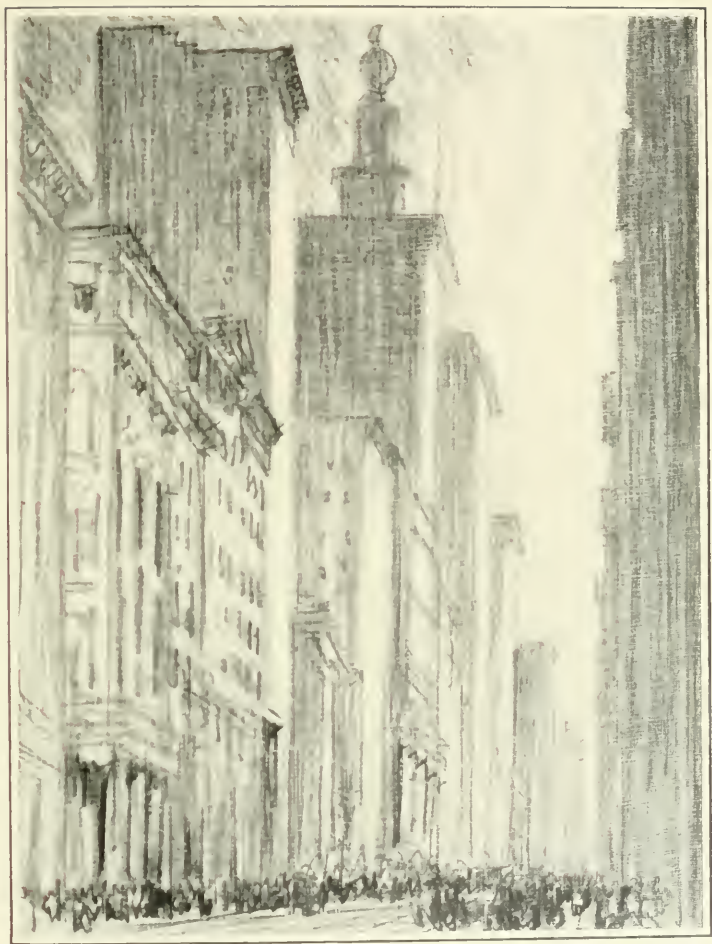
IF those who originally planned the streets of New York had possessed enough imagination to foresee the down-town habit of the present day, no doubt they would have arranged matters differently. They fancied that the city would be a great shipping center, a seaport; and that people would need many streets running toward the water on either side. Moreover, the long backbone of Manhattan, being high ground from which there was a general slope away toward the rivers, must have suggested that the natural drainage and sewerage of the city would be along the many ribs or streets running east and west. No one thought then that in a comparatively few years half the population would, morning and evening, be moving along the ridge of the island, crowding, clutching, struggling with one another, like so many ants traveling along the narrow top of a fence rail.

A glance at the map will show the peculiar disposition of the land. And it will also show hundreds of streets running east and west from river to river; but, at its

widest part (Fourteenth Street), only seventeen avenues running north and south, and the majority of these not available for through traffic. The map, when taken in connection with the accepted idea of most New Yorkers that business must be transacted within a stone's throw of Wall Street and living must be carried on in the neighborhood of the Central Park, will explain, readily enough, why there is so much friction during the "rush" hours. Hundreds of thousands of human ants want to pass along the fence rail at the same time. The wonder is, not that some of them get hustled and pushed, and that many lose the polish of their boots and the sheen of their hats; but that more are not injured or killed outright. The transportation of a million or more people a day from one point to another along the high ridge of crowded Manhattan is no easy task. They say in London or Paris or Berlin, with a little air of superior experience, that they do things differently over there. True enough, but the chances are they could not do this kind of thing at all.

The movement of these large bodies of people along the ridge begins early in the morning. From seven until ten o'clock one may notice the drift of people in the side streets toward the main thoroughfares. Men hurry along for a block or so and then disappear down a subway entrance, or up the steps of an elevated station, or they turn down an avenue to wait for a surface car.





PL. 13. — BROADWAY, DOWN TOWN



The surface lines along Third, Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh Avenues are always crowded with passengers from Harlem down as far as Union Square; but they are not usually taken by people who are moving toward the lower part of the city. They are not fast enough and are subject to being held up at every street crossing. The crowd in them is "getting to business" in the up-town stores and offices, or else is coming down from the region of the park to shop or travel or keep some form of engagement.

It is a good-natured, long-suffering crowd, and submits to being packed, like cattle in a box car, without a murmur. Long after the seating and standing capacity of a car is exhausted, the conductor keeps stopping for "just a few more." No one complains. Everyone has been one of the stopped-for, and knows what it means to be left standing on a street corner, perhaps in the rain. Finally the car is filled to the bursting point, and when a quick stop or a sudden start is made, the mass within, holding on by straps, rolls and sways like a lump of jelly. As for the crowds that choke the platforms without, they roll too, but regain their equilibrium by force of sheer bulk and iron railings.

The conductor wriggles in and out among the masses, collecting fares, disarranging toilets, and elbowing people right and left; but no one says anything in remonstrance. It is not that people fail to realize the absurd and the disagreeable in all this, but because they recognize the

unavoidable. What use to quarrel about what cannot be helped? They have to be at their posts at a certain hour, and there is no other way to get there. The service is inadequate, to be sure, but how can it be bettered? It changes completely every few years in the endeavor to accommodate itself to the increased demand; but the crowd keeps growing faster than human wit can devise larger and better means of transportation. The foreign visitor who stands agape at this packing of cars has not the smallest idea of the problem presented. It is not the moving of a few thousand people at leisure, but the carrying each day of nearly two million passengers in the borough of Manhattan alone, and the bulk of them during the "rush" hours at morning and evening. The squeezed and jammed and jellied public knows something about this, and, sensibly enough, agrees to accept the inevitable.

The volume of this up-town crowd of buyers, travelers, clerks, managers, typewriters, and shop girls that fill the surface cars in the early morning is by no means insignificant. It is really enormous, almost as great as the crowd that gathers in the neighborhood of Wall Street. For it is an exaggeration to say that all business is done down town. There are many large banks, insurance companies, printing-offices and wholesale houses, to say nothing of the retail shops, in the upper city. Then too, most of the railroading, manufacturing, and shipping is carried on along the upper east and west sides.



PL. 14. — BROAD STREET



And though all the surface cars in the morning going down town are filled to overflowing, the returning cars are not entirely empty. There are stray currents of humanity that help restore the lost balance — people who for one reason or another move in an opposite direction to the main streams. Harlem and beyond are not deserted when the Stock Exchange opens. Some business, some traffic is going on all over the city, at all times.

However, the main currents in the early morning set toward Wall Street and they find the lines of most resistance but of least time by way of the elevated roads and the subways. The crush on these through lines is similar to that on the surface cars. Train after train hums and rattles its way into the station to find a long wall of humanity lined up on the platform ready to board it. There is a clank of gates or the slam of an iron door, a few apologetic-looking people respond to the guard's call of "Passengers off first"; then there is an "All aboard," followed by a steady stream of people pouring in at each end of each car. The gates slam shut, the signal cord is jerked violently, the train with its electric power responds with another jerk, and is quickly under way. After half a dozen stops the train is filled, and if it is an express it runs through to The Bridge or Rector Street or South Ferry; if it is a local, it continues adding passengers, until the aisles and platforms are crowded, and people are hanging by straps as in the surface cars.



It is the same good-natured, tolerant crowd, whether met with on the surface and elevated roads, or in the subways. It stands jostling, pushing, elbowing with the utmost composure, each one knowing very well that he himself cannot get in or get out without doing the same thing. It even tries to be indifferent, looks out of the window or, more often, hides its face in the morning paper, if the crush is not too violent for the use of its hands. But the morning paper is not taken very seriously. The head-lines are read, and by the time Franklin Street and Park Place are reached many a journal has found its way to the floor, and is left there by its owner. The passengers now begin to file off. At Courtlandt and Rector half the occupants have disembarked to the refrain of "Step lively, please"; and when the Battery and South Ferry are called there are few to respond. The guards make a frantic effort to gather up the stray papers, the ventilators are reversed with a slam, and presently the train is going north at high speed for another load of passengers.

The disembarked hastens downstairs to the street or scrambles upstairs out of the subway, as the case may be, and there it meets and mingles with the larger moving throng of the lower city. Whence came this greater throng? How did it arrive here? What was its method of transit? To answer such questions one has only to remember that the island of Manhattan does not begin



to furnish houses and homes for all the people that do business in the city. There is a great host living on the outskirts, in the suburbs, within a radius of thirty miles of the City Hall, that comes and goes each day with more regularity than the tides in the harbor. This does not mean merely the contingent living to the north of the city in Westchester, or along the sound in Connecticut, though the representation from there is vast enough in proportions to fill the trains from Forty-Second Street down to the lower city. The streams of humanity flowing from that water-shed are very large and yet apparently they dwindle into insignificance compared with what pours in from Long Island.

Up through Brooklyn and along the great bridges there is continuous travel by trolley, motor, and foot, from early in the morning. Before nine o'clock the tide is at its flood. Around the New York exit of the Brooklyn Bridge the currents from many directions meet and mingle to make a veritable whirlpool of humanity that circles and eddies, foams and dashes, gets mixed up in a roaring swirl, then collapses in froth, dissipates, and finally trickles away in small streams to various points of the compass. Of course there is a blocking of traffic, and occasionally an accident, due to the rush off or on the cars, that produces confusion, excitement, loud protest, or angry denunciation. But this, though a not unusual occurrence, always leaves the pushed and hustled crowd more

or less indifferent. Everyone knows that the thoroughfares are insufficient during "rush" hours; but they do not know how matters can be helped.<sup>1</sup>

There is less of a crowd at the Williamsburgh Bridge because it is not the most direct route to the lower part of the city. It is one of the ways by which those who do business in the middle Broadway region travel, and it contributes its sum to the mass that each morning moves into the city; but it lends not directly to the congestion of the lower town. Still, though it is not a direct way, it adds something, like the ferries beneath it that keep coming and going from shore to shore. Time was when the ferries at South and Wall and Fulton streets were the only means of getting into the lower town from Brooklyn, and they were then, in the morning hours, often loaded with people to the gunwales; but since the building of the new bridges and the opening of the Battery tube, they have been used but little. Eventually their occupation will be gone completely.

Thousands upon thousands swarm into the city from Long Island. Bridges creak and ferries strain and tunnels roar with the weight of them; and the rasp and shuffle of their feet along the decks, along the bridge approaches, and along the flagged streets help make that deep under-

<sup>1</sup> The crush at the Brooklyn Bridge has been greatly reduced since the opening of the Battery tube in 1908. This has, for the time, diverted much of the South Brooklyn travel.

tone of the city to which the electric cars add the high note. Yet Brooklyn and beyond is only one source of intake. The shores of the Upper Bay, Staten Island, Coney Island, send up their quota by steamer and ferry-boat; while from the Hudson, reaching far into the state, steamboats and railways are bringing down and disembarking more thousands to swell the throng. But the body of commuters that comes in from New Jersey is, perhaps, the greatest of them all.

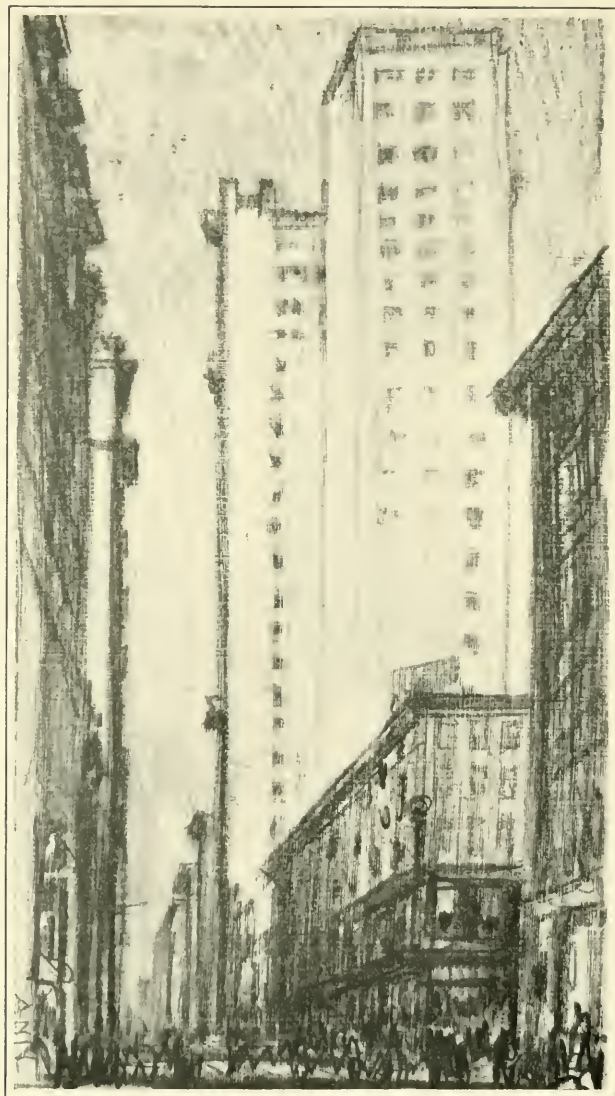
Probably four hundred thousand people is a moderate estimate for those who daily travel into New York from across the Hudson. It is nearer, no doubt, to half a million. The local trains on all the railways through New Jersey are crowded from seven to ten in the morning, and the double-decked ferries that push and snort and whistle their various ways from shore to shore look black with massed humanity. Again, as on the East River side, there are long tunnels under the Hudson, carrying passengers in swift electric cars; and these are lessening the crush on the ferries for the time being, but it will not be long before both tunnels and ferries are once more inadequate. The population in New Jersey that comes and goes daily to New York is increasing by thousands each year, and the greater the ease in getting to town, the better the traveling facilities, the more people there are willing enough to live in the country in preference to the crowded quarters of the upper city.

The traffic over and under the Hudson is already enormous, and what it will become a few years hence no one can even imagine.

One meets with the same throng crossing the Hudson River that he finds in the subways and the elevated trains. It is not over-polite. There are men who get up invariably to give their seats to women, and others who always apologize for crowding or jostling a neighbor; but there are many who do neither the one thing nor the other. It is not so much want of manners as thoughtlessness. They are not thinking about their neighbors. They have their minds fixed on the day's work and are quite unconscious of anything in their surroundings, except the time that is being made. They stand or herd together on decks and platforms, like bands of sheep in a corral, waiting silently until the boat or train is in, the gates are opened, and they can hustle up the runways and get into the street. Delay is about the only thing that frets them, and to miss a boat or a train is usually considered legitimate excuse for profanity.

Danger and disaster frequently follow upon this high-pressure speed, this unending hurry; but the average commuter by boat or by tunnel will not allow himself to contemplate the idea of anything happening to him. He dodges like a mackerel in a school attacked by blue-fish, and thinks it will not be his turn just yet. The train comes to a stop in the subway or on the elevated and instantly a





PL. 15. — ANN STREET

hundred windows go up and a hundred heads are thrust out, each one anxious to know what the delay is about. The block system may run up danger signals by the score, but the impatient mob within wants to know "why he (the engineer) doesn't go ahead."

It is just so on the rivers. Fogs shut down and shut out everything a boat's length away, the bells are ringing and the whistles blowing; but the mob on the decks, straining its eyes into the gray pall ahead, occasionally casts a glance toward the pilot-house and wonders why the boat is running under a slow bell. Every few minutes, even in fair weather, there is some craft crossing your bows or whistling shrilly that it intends to cross, and for you to "slack up." When your pilot whistles back that he rejects the proposal, that he will not "slack up," and the other craft can stop or take the consequences, there are plenty of people on the decks to murmur approbation. That is the proper spirit. No stop for anything. A collision? Well, — they would rather run that risk than get to the office late.

Through the ferry-houses, up the side streets, the moving, wriggling throng from New Jersey is shunted. It does not now bother with surface cars, for it is easier to get up toward the Broadway ridge by foot. It follows the sidewalks, fills them full to the curbstones, and winds on over gratings, around upright showcases, along iron steps, intent upon arriving at a certain place at a certain



hour, and not intent upon anything else. Obstructions, such as packing-cases being loaded on a truck, or a belated ash-man rolling a barrel across the sidewalk, divert the throng, but does not stop it. It turns out into the street, goes around, and then resumes its accustomed flow. Hawkers of knick-knacks, toy venders, fruit and flower peddlers, newsboys, yell and shout at it, but it does not swerve. It does not care for noise; but let some stranger, meeting another stranger, stop on the sidewalk to shake hands and talk for a moment, and instantly everyone is angry. The stream is backed up by meeting with a snag, and the chances are favorable for the snag-makers being pushed into the gutter. At any rate, they are quickly made to realize with Mr. Brownell that, "Whoever is not in a hurry is in the way."

It is the realization that the crowd itself is "in the way" that leads many of its units to drop out of it at side streets and make longer routes by less frequented thoroughfares. Often the longest way round proves the shortest way to the office; and there are many desertions from the throng that winds up Courtlandt or Chambers Street. However, the main body goes on and finally pushes into Broadway. There it mingles and is lost in the greater procession, some of which is going north, some south, and some plunging in front of trucks and trolleys in the attempt to get on the other side of the street. It is a swift and compelling procession. You move with it and at its set pace, other-



wise someone will be treading on your heels. In fact, to do as the crowd does, is almost compulsory.

The objective point of the crowd is undoubtedly at Broad and Wall streets, though there is no lack of activity along Broadway between Fulton Street and the Custom House, or for that matter along Park Row or on Broadway above the Post-Office. Still, there is an eddy in the region of the Stock Exchange where men drift about in circles as though they had reached their destination; and towards this eddy people on the side streets seem alternately drawn in and sent out by dozens and scores and hundreds.

Those who come and go in and about "the Street," are not necessarily heavy operators on the exchanges. They may be only clerks and messengers, office factotums. Some of them may have no business at all and are drawn there only by the movement of the throng. It is even believable that a part of the eddy is made up of driftwood — derelicts that have been stripped and deserted and are now floating idly about in the strom. The unfortunates that wander penniless in the Casino Gardens at Monte Carlo make up a considerable percentage of the so-called "gay throng" there, and Wall Street has its numerous shorn lambs called "capitalists" or "brokers" that still stand in the street and bleat.

They are all men. The women do some trading in stocks, too, but usually it is over the 'phone from up town. Petticoats in the lower city during business hours

are, of course, seen, but infrequently as compared with coats and trousers. And usually they belong to stenographers and typewriters who are employed in the various offices. The majority of women living in upper New York never go down town from year end to year end. The whole lower part of the city is given up to men and their business. They are nearly all what are called middlemen, and their business is betwixt and between. Few of them are, in any sense, original producers. They are doing something "on commission"; trading in stocks or cotton or pig-iron or petroleum, buying and selling for a percentage of the account. Even if they are selling tickets on steamers and railways, or writing life insurance policies, or practicing law up a sky-scraper, they are still men working for fees and salaries — middlemen who adjust and make possible, but do not produce.

So it is that the down-town crowd, as it winds hither and yon along the thoroughfares, is a peculiar crowd. On the surface it has little of the stronger if rougher element in it, — no mechanics in their shirt-sleeves, no stevedores, no miners, no mill-hands, no laborers. The immense foreign population of New York is not here in evidence, the negro is seen only occasionally, and such native types as the Yankee, the Southerner, the Missourian, the Californian, are not recognizable. In fact, it is a select, gentlemanly-looking, somewhat whey-faced multitude that one meets with in the Wall Street region. Its



PL. 16.— EXCHANGE PLACE

RECEIVED  
JUN 12 1904  
U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

hands are white, its body is fragile but active, its head is large and somewhat feverish. It works chiefly with its head. It thus wears out its nerves and is threatened continually with hysteria; but its tenacity and endurance are remarkable. It holds on, worries through, and in the end gains its point.

As these people pass you on the street, dressed fashionably, moving alertly, saluting each other half flippantly, you wonder if they can be the business men of New York who pile up such wonderful statistics in banking, trade, and commerce. Yes; some of them. Of course, the great majority of them hold subordinate positions. They are book-keepers, managing clerks, salesmen, little brokers, hangers-on. The heads of corporations and large institutions — the so-called “captains of industry” — get to their offices by different ways than the sidewalks, and spend little time wandering along Broadway or elsewhere; but their lieutenants and under-officers, those who will some day become captains, show in the crowd.

It may occur to you that these rather effeminate-looking, city-bred folk can know not a great deal about the larger aspects of manufacturing, commerce, and agriculture; that they must be ignorant of the practical workings of railways, steel mills, and copper mines; and that their trading in securities, their sale of grain and cotton, their handling of cattle, iron, and oil is all more or less of a guess and a gamble. Yes; but it might be

dangerous for you to presume upon that. The New York broker knows the financial side of America very well indeed; he is an excellent promoter and the cleverest of all commission men. It sounds righteous, and it is just now politically proper, to call him "a gambler"; but it is not an accurate term. Nor is it generically true. There are gamblers in New York, and on the exchanges, beyond a doubt; but there are also thousands of straightforward men of finance without whom we should fare badly. The country needs its Wall Street to handle its enterprises of great moment.

Are these then the representative men of New York? Yes and no. They are one kind of New Yorker, — the kind that figures with undue prominence perhaps in the newspapers, — but there are many kinds of people in the city. You shall not be able to point out the type, but you shall see many types. Among them the man in Wall Street is certainly to be reckoned with. He plays a very important part in the commerce and trade of the city. All told, perhaps the bankers of New York are the most powerful group of men on the western continent, and they certainly lend an atmosphere to the down-town district, if not to the whole city.

## DOWN TOWN







PL. V. LOWER BROADWAY ELECTION TIME







## CHAPTER V

### DOWN TOWN

It is difficult to convince the average person from without that everyone who transacts business in lower New York is not a banker, a money broker, or in some way directly connected with the Stock Exchange. The tradition has gone abroad that the only trading below the City Hall is trading in stocks, and that "down town" really means "Wall Street." Of course, it is not so. The people about the Stock Exchange, and the folk that press along the narrow width of Wall Street from Broad to Broadway, give one an exaggerated impression. There is trading going on in and about these streets without a doubt, a great volume of it; but there are also other transactions, taking place in other places near at hand, that have little or nothing to do with securities — transactions carried on by people who never go near the Stock Exchange and never trade in stocks of any kind.

There is another impression abroad among strangers to the effect that most of the business of Wall Street is transacted on the sidewalk. The phrase "in the Street" has been taken too literally, as meaning that operators in

the stock market carry on business involving millions in an unconventional shirt-sleeve manner while leaning against a lamp post, or smoking a cigarette in a restaurant. True enough, there are brokers who deal in securities on the sidewalk, securities of all kinds; and sometimes the transactions of this curb market are of some volume. And, true again it is, that the final word in a great "deal" may at times be passed by the head of one house to the head of another house while meeting casually in the street, or in some midday lunching club. But, generally speaking, business is not transacted that way. It is a little more formal, even in a great democracy. The bulk of sales are made indoors, on the exchanges. The crowd in the street means little more in barter and sale at the corner of Wall and Broad than along the sidewalk of Park Row or about Bowling Green.

There are so many people pushing along the sidewalks, or hurrying from curb to curb in the lower city, that the superficial observer quickly concludes that all the world is afoot and moving. That is another common mistake. The great throng of humanity that pours into Broadway and its side streets must go somewhere, else it would speedily choke up and fill the thoroughfares. As a matter of fact it begins to melt away as soon as it arrives. It disappears in side entrances, in hallways, down basements, up elevator shafts. Swinging circular doors, compressed air doors, slam doors, receive it. Iron wickets, steel gates,

bronze grilles, open and close for it. There is a slide and a click of the door, something like a long breath from the elevator, and almost before one can count his fingers he has arrived at the twentieth story. The number of people in the streets is enormous, but there are ten times the number seated on stools and chairs in the countless offices of the tall buildings. The great crowd is within rather than without. The committee on the Congestion of Population has estimated that if all the people in all the lower city left their offices for the street at one time, it would require six layers of sidewalks like the present ones to accommodate them.

It is not the sky-scraper alone that absorbs the multitude, though it does its share. The old-time granite and sandstone "blocks," the iron-clads of the seventies, even the ramshackle brick buildings slipping away toward the rivers, do service in the providing of office room. And it is remarkable how very little room is required to do a very extensive and prosperous business — that is, if one chooses to judge by advertisement and letter-head alone. Desk space is at a premium everywhere, and a spot large enough to hold two chairs is often vantage ground sufficient for a Napoleon of finance to dazzle the back country with his weekly bulletin of "points" on Wall Street. But aside from such pretension there is a great volume of business done in very small space in lower New York. The demand for quarters creates an exaggerated price, and

"office rent" is a large item in the yearly budget of every concern. Yet, large or small, the office is a desideratum. It is headquarters, and there transactions receive their last analysis and are paid for.

There are zones or districts in this lower town that seem sacred to certain kinds of business, and where other kinds do not flourish, practically do not exist at all. It seems that by some social instinct, or feeling of mutual protection, the birds of a feather are disposed to flock together. The stock and bond people flock around Wall Street, which, of course, means a district more than a street, the produce brokers form another group around Bowling Green, the shipping agents gather along lower Broadway, the insurance men between Wall and the City Hall, the coal and iron men on Courtlandt, and so on. The nucleus in each case is usually formed by an "exchange" where operators meet to get information, and to give and take orders. The interest of these exchanges, to the visitor, largely hinges upon the apparently excited movements of the operators. The Stock Exchange is the one usually visited by the country cousins in Gotham, who sometimes come away with the impression that they have seen a lunatic asylum temporarily freed from the restraint of the keepers. The method of bidding, with its suggestion of insanity in the actions, looks, and cries of the bidders, seems as necessary to the Stock Exchange as hammering and noise to a boiler shop. It is not, however, so hysterical



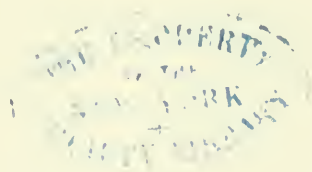
or frenzied as it looks. Most of the cry is physical and has for its aim the recognition of the crier as a bidder. To those in the thick of the bidding it is often as matter-of-fact as the loud announcement of the train ushers in the railway stations, or the street cry of the newsboys or fruit hawkers.

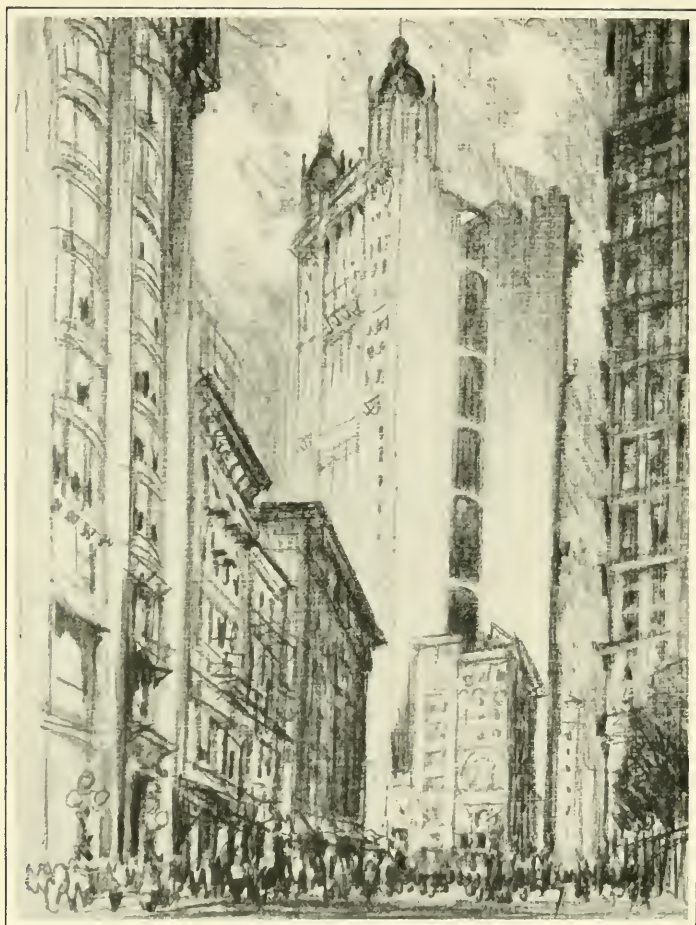
Moreover (to shatter another delusion), the operators down below on the floor are not the Wall Street capitalists whose names are so familiar, and whose stock manipulations are read about in the newspapers. On the contrary, they are merely the executants of orders, called "floor-brokers." Among them are "board members" of large firms, who are looking to it that orders are properly filled; sub-commission men, who work for other brokers and take a slice of the commission; and "room traders," who are sometimes used as stalking horses by large firms to cover up their transactions. They are all either bulls or bears, and are intent upon lifting up or beating down the market, as their interest may lie. They make a great noise and transact a large volume of business; but the people for whom they are doing the business do not appear on the floor, are not seen.

The Produce Exchange on Beaver Street and Broadway does for all manner of produce substantially what the Stock Exchange does for stocks. That is to say, its members buy and sell, in a "pit" or depressed ring in the floor, wheat, oats, barley, corn, feed, flour, tallow, oil, lard, tur-

pentine, resin — all manner of general produce. There is also a great deal of miscellaneous and contingent business transacted within the building. Sales of cargoes, arrangements for shipping, lighterage, insurance, may be speedily made and concluded without leaving the exchange. Reports from all sources are collected and bulletined, quotations here and abroad are given, prospects of growing crops with daily and weekly receipts in New York, and stock on hand in London and elsewhere are announced. The volume of business continues to grow each year at an astounding rate. The exchange itself profits by this. It started in small beginnings, under the blue sky, on the sidewalk. It was not formally known as the Produce Exchange until 1868, and it did not move into its present massive building until 1884. Since then its membership has increased to several thousands; and its influence upon trade and transportation has become most potent.

The Maritime Exchange is closely connected with the Produce Exchange. Its business is to promote the maritime interests of the city; and those who do business on or with the sea — agents, shippers, commission merchants, warehousemen, importers, brokers, marine underwriters, wreckers, ship-chandlers — are eligible for membership. The exchange keeps records of the arrivals and departures of ships, their movements about the world, and their sudden exits by fire and storm. It also keeps tables of the imports and exports, regulates and reports





PL. 17. — PARK ROW BUILDING

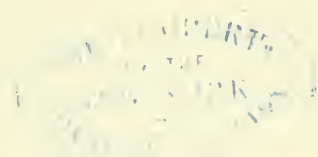
upon navigation and lighthouses, and promotes favorable river and harbor legislation. The Customs House and the Post-Office, as well as the newspapers, get much of the news about the come and go of shipping from this source.

Akin to these exchanges are others dealing with the special needs and wants of special industries. The Consolidated Stock and Petroleum Exchange, among other things, affords every facility and every information for the sale and shipping of petroleum. Each year the sales there run up to something over a billion barrels. The Cotton Exchange on Beaver Street deals in everything connected with the cotton industry and the marketing of the product. The Builders' Exchange has to do with the buying and selling of all kinds of building supplies such as cement, brick, stone, and the like; while the Metal Exchange on Pearl Street, the Wool Exchange on West Broadway, the Fruit Exchange on Park Place, the Brewers' Exchange on East Fifteenth Street, the Silk Association, the Shoe and Leather Exchange, all serve a purpose in promoting business in those commodities. Then there is that old-time gathering of jewelers on Maiden Lane about the Jewelers' Board of Trade, with the pre-Revolutionary Chamber of Commerce now on Liberty Street, and a Fire Insurance Exchange on Nassau Street.

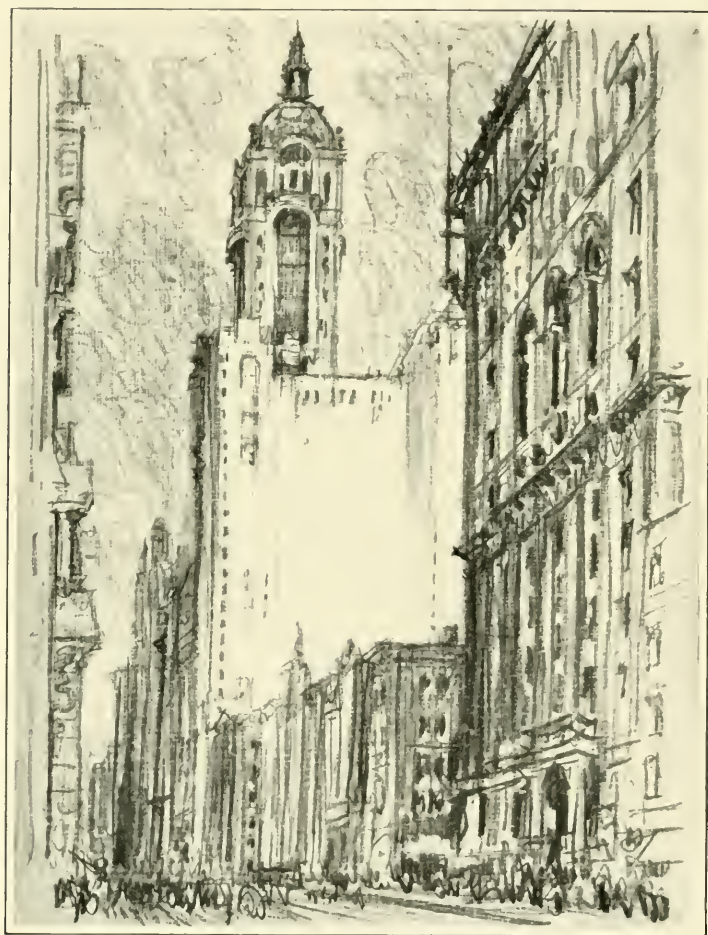
Besides these centers, which act as magnets in draw-

ing together the people directly interested in the various industries, there are spots or areas settled by people who have allied or identical interests. On Park Row and about Printing House Square are scores of buildings devoted to the publishing of newspapers; about Grand Street there are blocks given over to the wholesaling of dry-goods, down in the hollow of Canal Street are many freight and passenger railway offices, not far away are regions dedicated to shoes and leather, or groceries, or artificial flowers, or feathers and milliners' supplies. These spots, that sometimes cover many blocks, are, of course, broken here and there by interlopers in other businesses; and there are literally thousands of firms in lower New York that belong to no group and are not affiliated with any of the exchanges. There is hardly an important manufacturing concern in the United States that has not some sort of headquarters in New York below the City Hall, and hardly a great shipping or commission firm in any of the large towns that has not an office in the lower city.

The great majority of these offices are merely brokerage places where transactions are financed or arranged for, but not where the commodities themselves are actually delivered. The buying or selling is "for the account," and may result in a delivery at some future time in some other place; or it may be that no delivery at all is effected — the settlement being made by paying the







PL. 18.—CITY INVESTMENT AND SINGER BUILDINGS



balance, be it profit or loss. The sales, however, where actual delivery at some time and place is made, as in stocks, bonds, steel, sugar, cotton, wheat, oil, dry-goods, leather, are very heavy. If the estimate of them were given in dollars, it would have to be in billions, for millions would be inadequate to express it.

What "actual delivery" means in produce and manufactures, aside from delivery for domestic uses, is suggested by the volume of New York's foreign trade. It is five or six times as large as that of any other American city, and amounts to nearly one-half of the whole foreign trade of the United States. Each year over three thousand steamers and a thousand or more sailing vessels come up the bay from foreign ports. They bring the bulk of the things imported into the country, whether raw materials or finished products. Cotton, linen, wool, silk, furs worked up into wearing apparel, rubber, coffee, sugar, tobacco brought in crude and afterward refined or manufactured in New York, are the leading items.

The city's export trade is even greater than its import trade; but by comparison with other American cities, and considering the total exports of the country, it is not preponderant. Several large cities contend in the foreign shipments of wheat, corn, and barley, and New York handles only about one-quarter of the whole foreign consignment. Of animal products it ships fully one-half,

but of cotton, again, only about one-tenth. Still, all this when considered in relation to the production and trade of the country is of huge volume. Once more, if it be estimated in dollars, it must be in millions; and, if the domestic trade of the city with the interior country and the coastwise commerce of the port are included, the figures must be written in billions.

And even yet the "business" of the city is not half stated. No one seems to think of New York as a manufacturing town. It is considered a shipping port, a city of commission merchants and brokers, a place where wealthy people live because there is no soft-coal smoke as in Pittsburg, Cincinnati, or Chicago. A sooty air, blackened buildings, clanging trains of cars, and long lines of mill-hands in blue-jeans are not in evidence; therefore it is assumed that only a genteel book-keeping and profit-taking business goes on here. But not so. Under the blue sky and clear light of New York a larger and more valuable series of manufactures is produced than in any other city on the continent. Manhattan taken by itself, ranks first, and Brooklyn standing alone, ranks fourth in the volume and value of these manufactures. Neither of them beats into salable shape steel rails and iron beams like Pittsburg, nor puts up for the market canned and salted meats like Chicago; but they manufacture hundreds of small articles used in households here and elsewhere about the world.

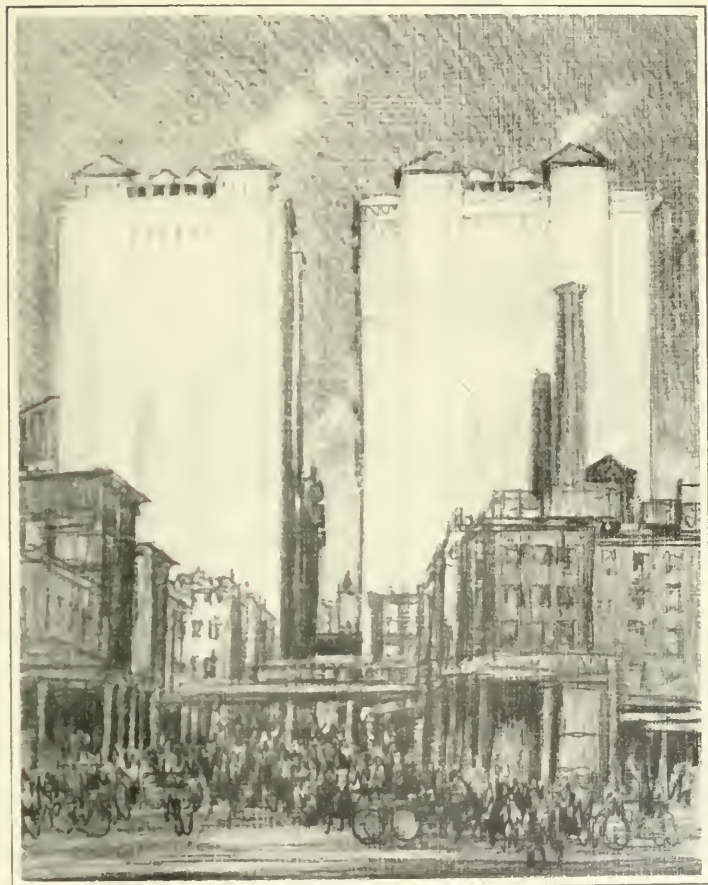
The item of clothing alone is something staggering in its figures. The large foreign population of Manhattan furnishes the necessary labor for this kind of work — much of it being done by piece-work in the tenements. The manufacture of cigars and cigarettes, of lace and millinery goods, of feathers, toys, and miscellaneous gimerackery, is also carried on by the tenement-house people. Then there is no end to the establishments that turn out furniture, musical instruments, electrical apparatus, tools, chemicals. The publishing and printing of books and papers is also a large industry; and the brewing of beers, the refining of sugar and molasses, the preparing of spices and coffees are probably the largest enterprises of all.

In Manhattan the majority of these manufactures are carried on in small buildings; or, if large, they are so far from the usually frequented avenues and streets that they are not remarked. The west side of the city, below Thirty-Fourth Street, is dotted with them; there are many scattered through the east side near the river; and there are others to the north along the Harlem. The Brooklyn water-front again is lined with factories, Long Island City has many of them, and Staten Island is almost girdled by them. Everywhere in the sparsely populated boroughs of Greater New York that have water-fronts, factories have sprung up. They are not welcomed by any except the persistent money-getters,

and, in fact, they are fast making New York unfit for residence; but they must be counted in summing up the city's resources. And so, for practical purposes, the great manufacturing interests on Long Island, along the Hudson, and over in North Jersey in towns such as Newark and Paterson, must be reckoned with as part of the city's wealth and business. That reckoning, once more, must be made in billions, for the million-dollar mark is not sufficient to indicate it.

And we have not yet so much as thought of the vast retail trade of the up-town districts. This is not merely the supplying of the immediate wants of one section of New York by the people in another section of New York. It is something more than selling or trading with one's self or one's towns-people. The retail trade of New York reaches to all quarters of the United States. What it comes to in figures would be difficult to determine with accuracy; but we shall not be far from the truth if we continue with our designation of billions. The word seems to smack of pretension or extravagance, but it is neither the one thing nor the other; it is the simple fact. New York numbers its inhabitants by the millions, and it must have something higher than that whereby to count its capital and its earnings.

Whether it is necessary that all the vast business interests of the metropolis, and of the country at large, should have offices down town under the lee of Wall



PL. 19. — TERMINAL BUILDINGS FROM WEST STREET



Street, is a question that needs little discussion. No doubt many of them would not suffer extinction if they had offices up town in the region of Forty-Second Street. The *New York Times* and *The Herald* have proved, at least, that there is no absolute necessity for newspaper enterprises being located on Printing House Square; and as much might be proved regarding the offices of shipping agents, insurance men, lawyers, and many others who now crowd the lower city districts.

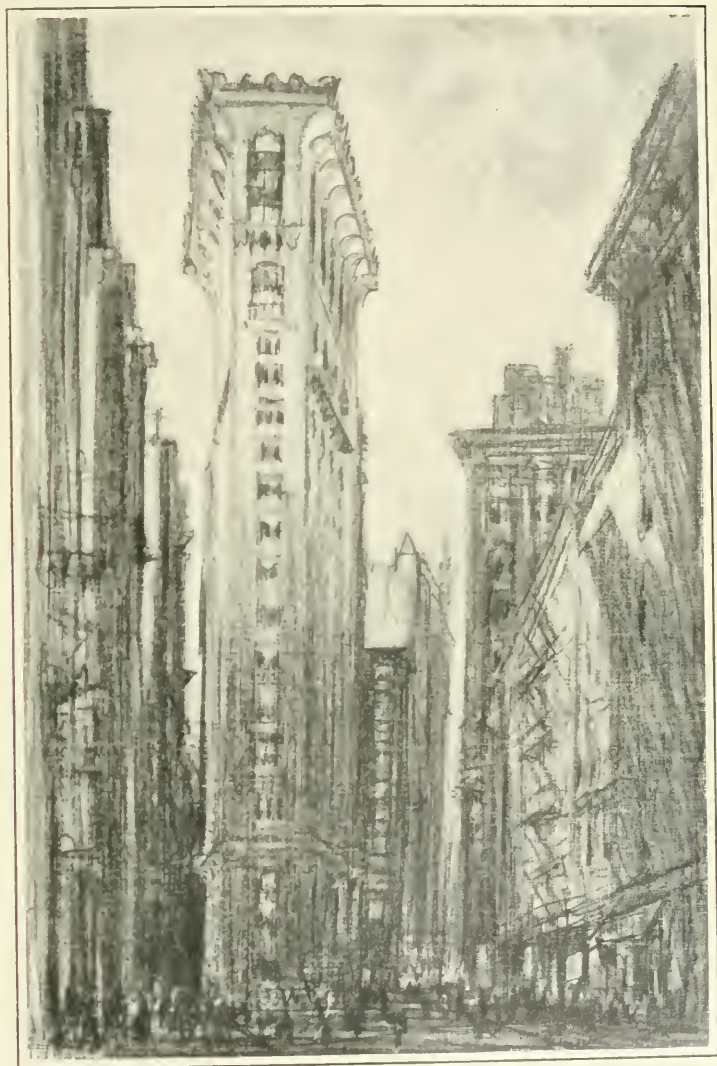
There is, however, an argument for the other side. It is a part of a banker's capital that he hail from Wall Street and have an office there, just as it is a hall-mark of quality, an insignia of respectability, for a jeweler to send his circulars out into the country from Maiden Lane. Moving up town, to many of these houses, would spell ruin, — or at least they so regard it. It would be a losing of identity. Besides, there is business convenience in close quarters and short distances. A central hive saves time and energy. And so strong has the down-town instinct become that one might remove the very hive itself and still the bees would swarm on the platform where it formerly stood.

Of course the come and go of the throng each morning and evening, the push and surge and scramble along the fence rail, are caused by the endeavor to get in or out of the hive. Of course, again, the necessity for accommodations for the tenants of the hive has made the ground space

of the lower city phenomenally valuable. So great became the value of that land a few years ago, that a better utilization of it in buildings grew to be a necessity. Out of that necessity came the much used and much abused sky-scraper, the tall building that everyone scolds about and yet finds too useful to get on without — the one architectural success in which America is wholly original and beholden to none.

But the sky-scraper is of so much importance in New York to-day that it requires a chapter of its own.





PL. 20. — LITTLE FLATIRON, MAIDEN LANE

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
LIBRARY

1907





PL. VI. — BUILDING A SKY-SCRAPER

PL. VI. BUILDING A SKY SCRAPER



THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
LIBRARY



## CHAPTER VI

### SKY-SCRAPERS

THE story is told of a Brahmin philosopher, sitting with a friend in his walled garden, and jesting over the smallness of the enclosure. It was not very long nor yet again very wide; but how deep down it was, and what wonderful height it had! The depth beneath and the space overhead were unavailable possessions to him. He smiled at what he owned yet could not grasp or utilize.

But land values have radically changed in modern days, especially in America. Any one who owns a small plot of ground in a large American city need not smile over its height and depth, for those are now very valuable dimensions. They can both be turned to profit, turned into very tangible assets. The clever modern has found a way of not only digging in the earth, but of rising into the air on pinions of steel and sustaining his altitude almost indefinitely in time and in space.

It is a very cramped and limited region of New York that lies below the City Hall. It has always lacked elbow-room; it has always been crowded. The mere surface dimensions of it were exhausted years ago. That, however, did not stop the influx of people seeking office

room there. To accommodate the continued and increased inrush from year to year various expedients were put forth. At first the land-owners began burrowing in the ground, fitting up quarters below the curb line, — quarters where business was carried on only by artificial light at noonday. That proved, however, scarcely a temporary relief. It was wholly inadequate. Following this expedient, or perhaps contemporary with it, there was an adding of stories upon the old foundations — an increase from, say, four to six and eight floors. But there were limitations to that. People would not climb flights of stairs; and, again, brick could not be laid upon brick indefinitely. The first objection was, in a measure, done away with by the invention of the passenger elevator. From 1860 to 1880 steam and hydraulic elevators were used, but it was not until about 1888 that electric elevators came into vogue.

With the coming of the elevator the eight-story buildings began to pay better in their top floors than in their middle or lower ones. "High livers," so called, preferred the light and air up aloft. Everything began to rise with the elevator — buildings, prices, ambitions, expectations; but still the right planning of the modern office building had not been reached. The eight-story or ten-story structure of marble or brick was too heavy, too bulky in the walls. As the height increased the foundation walls had to be thickened proportionately. To spread out at

the bottom in walls was to lose the advantage gained in offices at the top. Again, the additional number of elevators required by the increased number of occupants began to fill up space and lessen the available floor area. Iron came into the construction and was used for beams; iron pillars superseded stone pillars; the bulk in the lower walls was thus slightly cut down. Shortly thereafter an iron core to carry the floors was used on the inside of masonry walls, and a double construction was brought about. Both shell and core were self-sustaining.

And yet this new plan added only a few more stories, and left the larger problem still unsolved. The walls that had to bear merely their own weight soon began to thicken again at the base as the building grew in height. Brick, granite, marble, and even iron, alone or in combination, were found wanting. After a certain weight was put upon them, a certain height was gained, there came a danger line. What stronger, more durable, less bulky material could be used to carry into the region of twenty stories? The answer came back in plans for a structure of steel — something following the general design of a bridge truss standing on end with the strain so adjusted by brace and girder, that the whole weight of the walls and floors would be finally conducted downward by post and beam until brought to bear upon the rock foundations. The result of the plans was the modern sky-scraper.

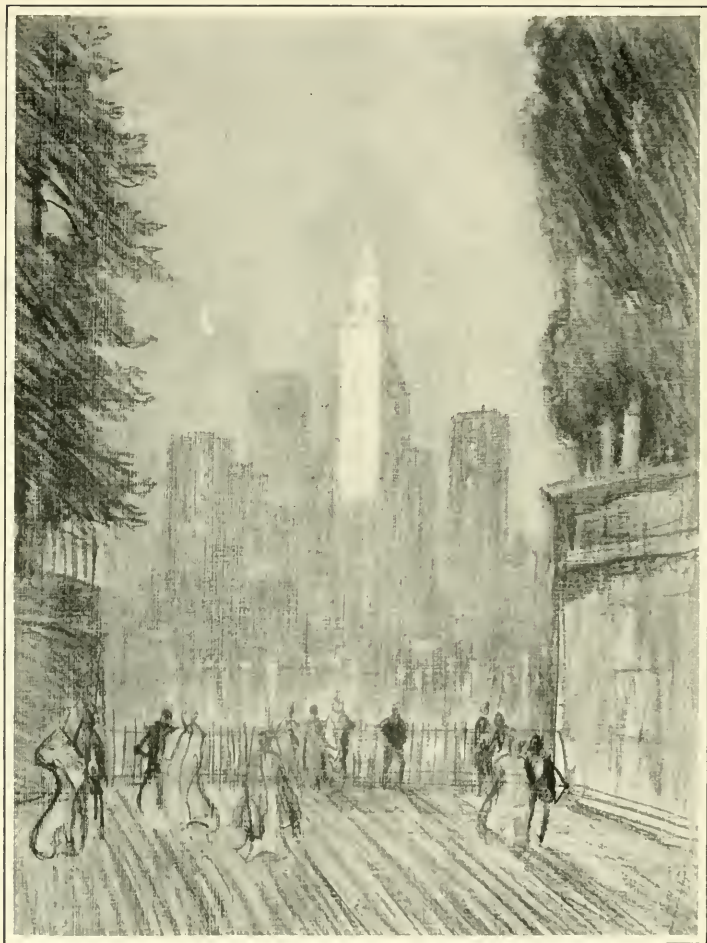
It must not be forgotten that necessity was the mother

that invented and brought forth the sky-scraper. It was a device at first to utilize small plots of valuable, heavily taxed ground, to make these plots not only more valuable, but more remunerative in rents. The steel construction is now used on large plots of ground because it has been found a cheap and profitable mode of building; but that came about as a growth from the original idea. In its inception it was designed to meet a more positive need, to make ten rooms where only one was before, and thus to increase revenue and render tax assessments less appalling. The story of the conception and the building of the first sky-scraper in New York will illustrate this.

The Tower Building on lower Broadway was the initial steel skeleton building erected in the city, and its architect was Bradford Lee Gilbert. It was put up in 1888-89 on a plot of ground twenty-one and a half feet in width. There was a frontage on Broadway of that width, leading back to a larger space on New Street. Using the Broadway frontage as a mere entrance to the larger premises at the back was an extravagance which the Tower Building was designed to do away with. Mr. Gilbert's plans called for a structure of thirteen stories (about one hundred and sixty feet in height) to stand upon this space of twenty-one feet. The enclosing walls were to be twelve inches in width and to bear no weight.<sup>1</sup> The weight of

<sup>1</sup> The space saved by these walls alone, so much thinner than the previous stone construction, afterward amounted to \$10,000 a year in rentals.





PL. 21. — SKY-SCRAPERS FROM BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

the walls and the floors was to be transmitted to the steel columns, and thus passed on down to the cement footings of the foundation. Of course there was objection to the building at once. Architects declared it unsafe and impracticable, and, the newspapers said the plan was "idiotic."

"When the actual construction of the building began," says Mr. Gilbert in a *New York Times* interview, "my troubles increased tenfold. The mere suggestion of a building 21½ feet wide, rising to the height of 160 feet above its footings, filled everybody who had no particular concern in the matter, with alarm. Finally an engineer with whom I had worked for many years came to me with a protest. When I paid no attention to him, he wrote to the owner. The owner came to me with the letter. He was afraid the building would blow over and that he would be subject to heavy damages. My personal position in the matter and that of the Building Department that had given me the permit, never seemed to strike him at all. Finally I drew out my strain sheets, showing the wind bracings from cellar to roof, and demonstrated by analysis that the harder the wind blew the safer the building would be; as under one hundred tons, under hurricane pressure, while the wind was blowing seventy miles an hour, the structure was cared for by its footings and was safest. . . .

"This seemed to satisfy him and we went ahead. One Sunday morning, when the walls of the building were ready for the roof, I awoke to find the wind blowing a hurricane. That gale is a matter of record in the Weather Bureau. With a friend, who had implicit faith in my plans, I went down town to the sky-scraper. A crowd of persons who expected it to blow over stood at a respect-



ful distance to watch the crash. Janitors and watchmen in adjoining buildings and structures across the street moved out. They were afraid of being crushed to death, and said unpleasant things about my steel building. I secured a plumb-line and began to climb the ladders that the workmen had left in place when they quit work the previous evening. My friend went with me as far as the tenth story. The persons who looked at us from below called us fools. When I reached the thirteenth story, the gale was so fierce I could not stand upright. I crawled on my hands and knees along the scaffolding and dropped the plumb-line. There was not the slightest vibration. The building stood as steady as a rock in the sea. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Since 1889 many steel buildings have towered into the air, and many improvements have been made upon the original design. To-day the sky-scraper is still regarded as the best means of making heavily taxed land profitable, though that idea has become somewhat merged in the general value of the building principle. The New Trinity Building on Broadway, though not the largest nor the highest in the city, is a good modern instance of the finan-

<sup>1</sup> This was in 1889, and ten years later, so universal was the acceptance of the steel-constructed building, that the original model, the Tower Building, had become ancient history. That it might not be wholly forgotten, the Society of Architectural Iron Manufacturers of New York placed a tablet upon the building to commemorate its erection, giving the names of both the architect and the construction company that built it. It is worthy of note in passing, because it is suggestive of the swift transitions taking place in this new world, that the marvelous sky-scraper of 1889 is already doomed to be torn down to make room for a greater building, a greater marvel.



cial side of the sky-scraper, and may be used here in illustration. The plot of ground upon which it stands is two hundred and sixty feet long, with forty feet of frontage on Broadway and forty-seven feet at the rear on Church Street. This land alone, before the erection of the new building, was valued at \$2,000,000. What is more to the point, it was taxed at that valuation. Under our system of taxation, taxes are not levied upon the income of a property, but upon the assessed valuation whether there is any income attached or not. In London, for instance, it is quite the reverse of this. A man owning ground on Piccadilly could turn it into a cow-pasture if he would, and pay taxes on its income as a cow-pasture; but if he held the same amount of property in lower New York, he would have to pay in taxes something like two per cent on several millions of dollars. This turn of the tax would bring him face to face with one of, say, three propositions. He would have to put the land to a more profitable use than pasturing cows, or sell it to someone who could so employ it, or pay a hundred thousand dollars or more a year for the privilege of defying the inevitable.

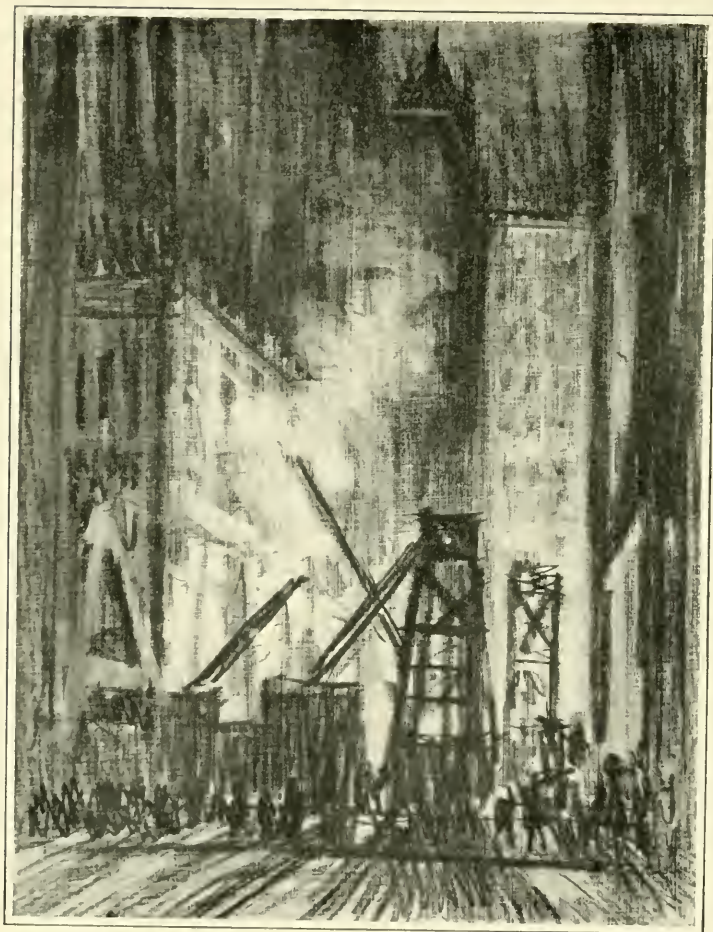
Our foreign friends, who greatly wonder why we cannot be content with five- or six-story buildings in the lower city, as our grandfathers were, fail to understand our system of taxation, fail to understand that the tax bill keeps mounting higher with increased valuations, and

that the income must increase to meet it. The tax on the ground alone of the Trinity property had become so enormous that the income of the old structure could not meet it. Hence the old came down and the new went up — went up three hundred feet, until one could, from its upper stories, look down on the spire of Trinity Church, that for so many years had been the high point of the city's sky line. The necessity for more room, the necessity for a better utilization of the ground space, the necessity for more rent money to pay increased tax bills, all combined to bring the new structure into existence.

Between two and three millions of dollars were spent in the construction of the New Trinity Building. This, with its land valued at two millions, raised the gross valuation to about five millions of dollars. To meet the taxes and the interest charges upon this sum there are now some twenty-one stories that pay, on an average, twenty-three thousand dollars annual rental for each story. The ground floor alone rents for seventy-five thousand dollars a year. A pencil and the back of an envelope will enable anyone, in a few minutes, to figure out the business success of the enterprise. Everything sooner or later resolves itself into a matter of finance, especially in New York; and things must "pay," otherwise they will not last for long.

The cost of these huge structures makes rapidity in construction something of a necessity. Five millions of dollars





PL. 22. — WORKING AT NIGHT ON FOUNDATIONS

drawing interest at five per cent means a quarter of a million dollars a year; and the sooner the building begins earning rentals, the better for those who have the financial end of the enterprise to carry. Hence the speed with which the average sky-scraper is erected. A few months at the most is often sufficient to see it in place, fully equipped, and occupied. This speed in construction is greatly facilitated by the peculiar nature of the building. Once the foundations are laid the erection of the steel frame is merely a matter of bolting and riveting so many beams, girders, cantilevers, and brackets. This work can usually be carried on in many places at the same time, and large forces of men can be employed in day and night shifts. So it is that there is some truth in the common exaggeration that sky-scrapers are put up overnight. One can actually see the steel platforms grow from hour to hour as they lift higher and higher into the air.

The frame of steel is the core of the building. It is the only thing that bears or carries any weight. Everything that is put on afterwards is fastened to or hangs from this skeleton — with the possible exception of one or two stories at the bottom which, in their walls, may bear their own weight. The upper walls, whether of brick, terra-cotta, cement, or stone, depend from the steel structure to which they are attached by brackets. They may give the impression of being self-supporting, they may beguile one into thinking that back of the walls

engineering, but of finance, that is to be considered.<sup>1</sup> If still higher buildings will pay, they will probably be built.

In office capacity the high towers are not so remarkable as the buildings of more bulk and less altitude. The City Investing Company Building is only four hundred feet in height and has only thirty-six stories, but its floor area is 686,000 feet, and there were seventeen thousand tons of steel used in its construction. In sheer "bigness" the Terminal Buildings on Courtlandt and Church streets go beyond this. The two buildings stand linked together by a bridge like Siamese twins and are twenty-one stories in height. Their foundations are seventy-five feet below the curb, and in this deep excavation are placed the terminal stations of the Hudson and Manhattan Railroad, which operates the Hudson tunnels in connection with a subway on the west side of New York. The superstructure required twenty-six thousand tons of steel and provides eighteen acres of floor space, four thousand offices, thirty-nine passenger elevators (twenty-two of them express cars), five thousand windows, thirty thousand electric lights; and no one knows how many janitors, engineers, firemen, locksmiths,

<sup>1</sup> There has been a proposal recently made by the Building Code Revision Commission that a limitation of 300 feet for a sixty-foot street and 135 feet for a forty-five-foot street be imposed upon the high buildings; but this, if adopted, will not check the sky-scraper, except on the alleys and very narrow streets.





PL. 23. — AMONG THE TALL BUILDINGS





glaziers, painters, plumbers, to keep it running properly. It called in all the trades to build it and needs a great many of them to continue its existence. It might be added in parenthesis that the services of a financier are also needed to look after the items of rents and repairs — especially the latter. The wear and tear upon a sky-scraper are quite as astonishing as the other things in connection with it.

Almost all of these high buildings are supplied with the conveniences of a city, and one can live in them indefinitely without going out for food, clothing, or lodging. Besides offices, they contain stores, clubs, restaurants, bachelor apartments, barber shops, cigar and news stands, boot-cleaning establishments, baths, safe-deposit vaults, roof gardens — everything except vaudeville, and even that is a possibility of the near future. Moreover, each one of them contains the inhabitants of a city. In the larger ones there are from six to ten thousand tenants; and from 50,000 to 100,000 people pass in, or through, or up and down them in a single day.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, all the tenants and their thousands of clients and customers require gas and electricity, private telephones, hot and cold water, electric fans in summer, and steam heat in winter. The mechanical devices for supplying these are ingenious to the last degree. For instance, in the matter of heat, where so many men have so many

<sup>1</sup> The new Whitehall Building promises to surpass even these figures.

opinions, there is a device in the newer office buildings whereby each room is supplied with a heat indicator, and all one needs to do is to turn the pointer to the required number, 60, 70, or 80 degrees Fahrenheit, to have the heat at that temperature in a few minutes. As for such other features of life as meals, messenger boys, cabs, and service in general, one touches a button as in a hotel or a house.

If there is one thing above another that makes the skyscraper possible, it is the elevator. Without it the inhabitants of the top stories would have to climb the mountain each morning, and descend it each evening — something no man or superman could or would do. The elevator is the central pulsing artery of the whole steel structure; and it is a very rapid pulse in the bargain. For the first ten stories you move slowly if you get into the local elevator stopping at each floor; but, if you are bound twenty-five stories up, you travel by the express elevator and the first stop is perhaps the eighteenth or twentieth floor. You enter the car and when it starts perhaps there is a feeling that your stomach is not accompanying you, so rapidly does the car get under way. When the car stops, it is again so suddenly that you feel as though the top of your head were continuing the journey without you. When you go down again, the top of your head threatens to part company once more; but you are landed at the street entrance as softly as

though borne upon zephyrs and clouds — thanks, perhaps, to the air cushion.

The elevator is indeed the genius of the sky-scraper as it is the incarnation of the get-there-quick idea. Rapid transit never had a more exemplary exponent. It works swiftly, silently, and to all appearances uncomplainingly and everlastingly. Each sky-scraper has from six to thirty of these shuttles that fly backward and forward, taking up and setting down passengers; and in the course of the day carrying many thousands of people. Nothing is more amazing to the stranger in down-town New York than to see the cool and yet swift way that tenants of the high buildings load themselves into these steel cages. There is nothing said but “Up” or “Down” by the elevator boy; and nothing said but “Tenth” or “Thirty-Second” or some other floor number, by the passenger; but everyone understands, steps lively, shrinks when the elevator is crowded, expands when it is empty, and makes as little of a nuisance of himself as possible. If it were not for this perfect understanding of sky-scraper machinery and the recognized ethics of the crowd, there would be instant confusion. Such high buildings as the Singer, the Park Row, the St. Paul, the Trust Company of America, use elevators as a necessity rather than a convenience; and there is required some concerted action on the part of the passengers to make them successful.

Not in lower New York alone do the tall buildings

with their swift elevators crop out, though they are more concentrated there than elsewhere in the city. All over the borough of Manhattan they are to be seen. They are not only expedients to utilize extra-valuable real estate, but are in themselves cheap and durable buildings and ordinarily profitable investments.<sup>1</sup> The steel skeleton is to-day used in almost all the large hotels, apartment houses, clubhouses, printing shops, department stores, wholesale houses, and even factories. From the Battery to Harlem and beyond these tower-like buildings keep breaking above the whilom sky line like jonquils above the grass of a spring lawn. The parks of the city are surrounded by them, Union and Madison squares, with the Plaza, are dominated by them, Broadway, dwindling away into the north, still has echoes of them; and Fifth Avenue, with its twin pylons, the St. Regis and the Gotham, already in place, will soon become a canyon like Broad Street or lower Broadway.

Everywhere they are safe, serviceable, absolutely necessary buildings; and it may be added that eventually people will find them not wanting in beauty. Just now many of them seem to stand like guideposts, showing where and how the city is to be built, and what the level of its new roofs. Naturally they look out of scale, and very much too high when compared with the older

<sup>1</sup> The Baltimore fire and the San Francisco earthquake proved the steel building far safer and more lasting under storm and stress than either brick or stone.



PL. 24. — POST OFFICE AND CITY HALL PARK

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
+  
SOCIETY LIBRARY

buildings; but when the empty spaces in between are filled, the Flatiron and the Times Building, with the Metropolitan Life and the Plaza Hotel, will not appear out of proportion. Tremendous in scale they are, certainly; but then that is the New York that is to be.







# THE NEW CITY





PL. VII. NEW YORK TIMES BUILDING

PL. VII. - NEW YORK TIMES BUILDING



PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
CITY

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEW CITY

THE steel structure has not gone on its way soaring into the empyrean without being challenged, criticised, and denounced. Every Frenchman that comes to us shrugs his shoulders over the "skee-scrapaire," and looks unthinkable things, though he may say nothing; our English friends are usually frank enough to assure us that we are architecturally demented; and even Madame Waddington and Mr. James, one-time Americans, return to us after many years to tell us that the high buildings are "hideous." That is not the worst of it. Many New Yorkers entirely agree with them, and can find nothing good to say of the new city. They talk much of the sordid and commercial spirit (and there is much to be said against it), they speak of the destruction of the old things, — old streets, houses, churches, graveyards, — and they hark back a great deal to the old city and the good old times.

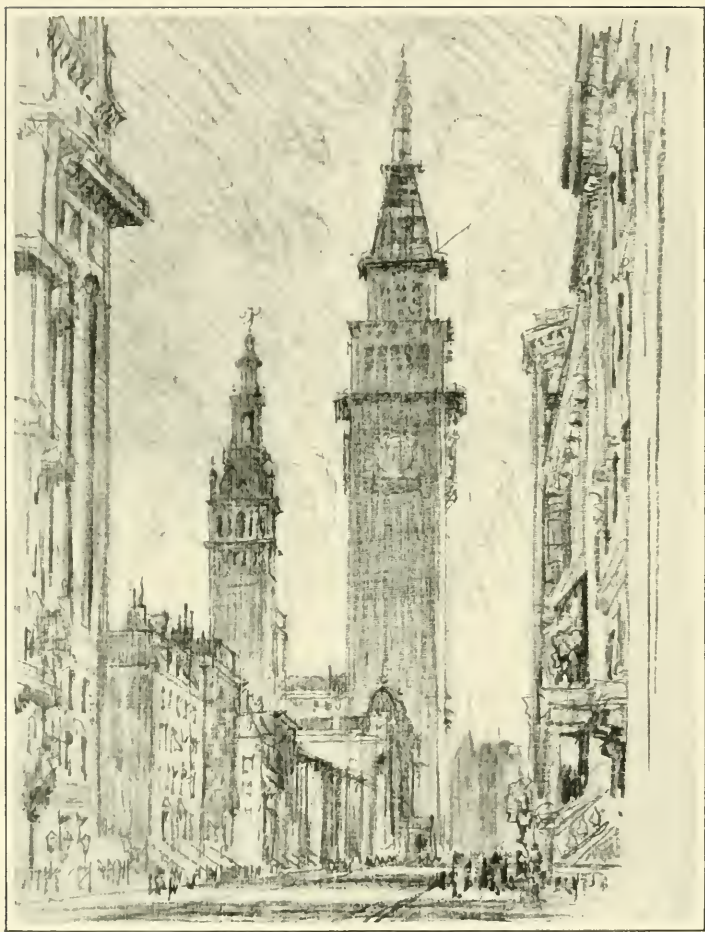
They have always done so, in the past as in the present, quite ignoring the fact that time was never so old and never so good as just now. There has ever been an objection to both the innovator and the innovation. People

become attached to things, to conditions, to environments, and they dislike any disturbance of the *status quo*. It is not that the things are necessarily good or bad, but that they *are*, that they exist, and that we have become accustomed to them. Instinctively we love the broken path, and fall into ways of acting and methods of thinking from which we would not be jostled in the name of change or variety or progress. Mr. James, returning to New York after twenty years, misses what he left when he went away, and wonders that the city has changed. During his absence he has been accustomed, perhaps, to the streets of London, and he is somewhat surprised to find those of New York so unlike them. But what came he forth to see, a conventional city, a model of regularity, a place where people carry on the affair of living as becomes a luxurious upper class? Why was it to be supposed that history would repeat itself and produce on this continent, under entirely different conditions, another Vienna or Paris? Why is it that people seek here the Place de la Concorde, or the Ringstrasse, or Trafalgar Square? Nothing in our history or our social state or our commerce has called for such places; and yet, having seen them elsewhere, people think them necessary parts of every city and marvel that New York lacks them.

It should be insisted upon again that New York is not primarily a place of residence, nor a center of government; but a city of commerce. In Paris people live over







PL. 25. — LOOKING DOWN MADISON AVENUE

the shops in the busiest streets of the city ; and, at best, the exclusively residential portion along the Champs Elysées, and in the region of the Arc de Triomphe, is neither very extensive nor very far removed from the Boulevard des Capucines and the Avenue de l'Opéra. Again, the Strand and Piccadilly and Mayfair seem to be one, and even the Bank district of London is not wholly deserted of houses where people live. But not so New York. Its people, perhaps unconsciously, recognize that it is not a place to live in, and hundreds of thousands doing business there live out of it, have homes on Long Island or in Westchester or over in New Jersey, and come to the city each morning and leave it again each evening. Even those who stay in town and have homes therein try to put as much distance as possible between their houses and their offices. Below Canal Street, and practically below Union Square on either side of Broadway running south, there are business buildings only. No one lives there except care-takers and their families, perched upon the roofs of the high buildings, or occupying quarters in the basement. The things that make for pleasure, for comfort of family or home, for restful scene and quiet stroll, are not wanted there ; they would, in fact, be in the way and more or less of a hindrance. The lower city is a shop or office, is fitted up solely with an eye to trade, and is given over wholly to business.

The residential section of New York has been pushed

farther north year by year until now, with some exceptions, such as the Washington Square region and its adjoining side streets, the southern line is drawn at, say, Twenty-Third Street. There is a tendency to gather east and west about the Central Park or along the Riverside Drive. Of course, on the extreme sides of the lower city, both east and west, there are vast tenement-house districts thickly populated; but these are not, in any general sense of the phrase, "the residential portions" of a city. Moreover, those things that Mr. James feels the lack of in New York, he would not expect to find in the lower quarters of London or Paris. The slums are not the places in any cities that are pointed out as restful or homelike or samples of civic beauty.

Even in the best quarters along the east side of the Central Park our French and English friends will find nothing that reminds them of the square houses of Hyde Park, or the monotonous gray-stones of the Champs Elysées. Time was when the streets of upper New York wore a dull garment of chocolate-brown, and were as sedate and as uniform as the spirit of 1850 was prosaic. But all that has largely disappeared with the new era, and in its place there are infinitely varied houses of brick, stone, and marble. The great wealth of the city is throwing off an ornate efflorescence in its up-town houses, just as the commercial wealth of Florence centuries ago reared splendid palaces along the Arno; and just as that of Buda-Pesth





PL. 26. — METROPOLITAN MUSEUM AND EIGHTY-SECOND STREET

or Bucharest is doing to-day in its florid rendering of the *art nouveau*. It is picturesque and quite appropriate to the commercial center of the western continent; but it is not at all like the picturesque of Whistler's London or Balzac's Paris. That, it seems, is the chief grievance of our critics. The city is not like other cities, therefore it must be very bad. "Hideous" is a word that seems to apply exclusively to things modern; and when the old things were new things, undoubtedly it was applied to them, too.

A city or a nation in its art should represent itself, — its people, its industries, its life, — and should do so sincerely and sanely. There could be neither honesty nor common sense in erecting the towers of Westminster down town in New York, or the Madeleine or St. Peter's up town. We already have enough and to spare of these imitations. The Giralda tower of the Madison Square Garden, for instance, is an attempt to plant the old in the new; and yet what purpose does it fulfill? It has at its top neither bells nor clock nor muezzin to call to prayer, nor at its base any chapel, church, or sanctuary in which to pray. Unlike its Seville original it is only ornamental, and has not the saving grace of being useful. However, it is perhaps justifiable on the plea that it dominates a place of amusement and is what it was designed to be, "a drawing feature." But how or in what way does it represent New York or its people? And what does it



express in art more than a certain eclectic cleverness in its designer?

On the contrary, the vilified Flatiron, facing on the same open square, does represent the commercial spirit of New York, whether people like their commercialism flung in their faces in that way or not. It stands for common sense, and is a very proper utilization of a most valuable triangle of ground—one of the most valuable in the upper city. And it is not unjust in proportions, nor wanting in fine angle lines and sky lines; while seen from upper Fifth Avenue through the mist of evening it is a wonder of color, light, and shade. Of course any dog can be given a bad name, and the Twenty-Third Street building was not improved in public esteem by being called a flatiron, nor again by being likened to an ocean steamer with all Broadway in tow. But the smile and the laugh should not confuse our estimate. The Flatiron is a representative New York building; and, while making no great ornamental splurge, it fills its place admirably, and will be considered not the least successful unit in the colossal quadrangle that will some day hem in Madison Square.

The Flatiron and the New York Times Building stand apart, each occupying a given space of ground and unrelated to other buildings by party walls. The street is their boundary on every side and they are complete in themselves. They do not yet look quite as they should,



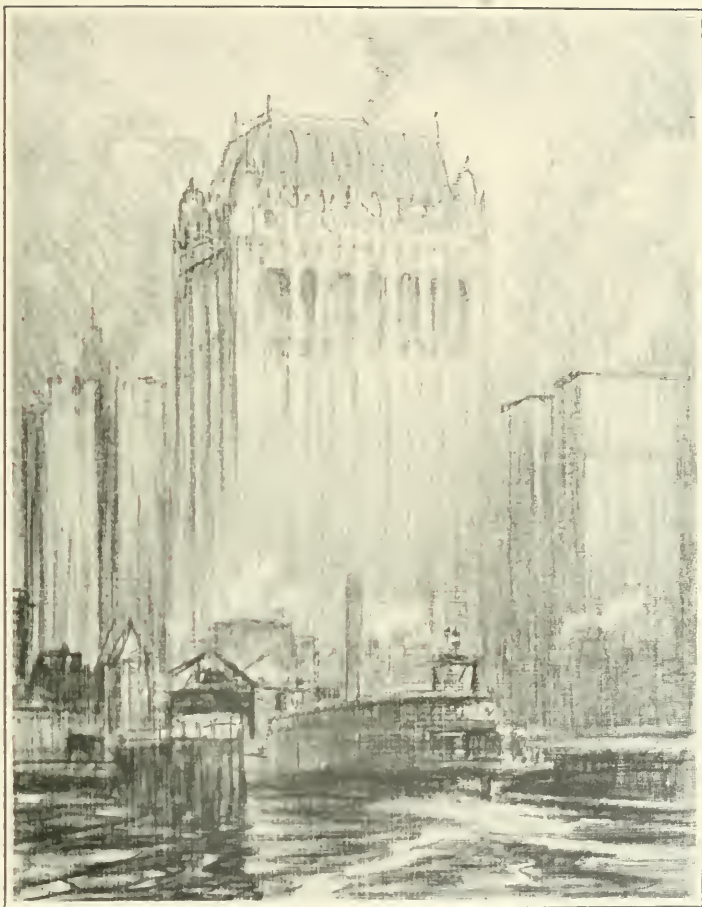
because standing isolated; but, when the adjoining blocks and the streets around them are built up with sky-scrapers, the relationship will be apparent. Yet even in their present surroundings they are seen at a better advantage than the majority of the new buildings. Many of them rise to twenty stories with only the street wall in presentable shape. The other three faces remain, as a general thing, in a loose-end condition, waiting for the owners on either side to erect structures and thus shut out from view raw partitions and unfinished surfaces. It is in this condition that people see so many of the downtown buildings, and upon the impulse of the moment break out in superlatives about the "hideousness" of the new city.

This judging of the picture by the half-finished sketch, and without sufficient imagination to see the work completed, results in many misconceptions. And then, again, in such swiftly constructed buildings, planned in a month and put up in less than six months, there must be necessarily much that is deficient, false, or hopelessly bad. It could not be otherwise. And still again, the architect has been confronted with new demands, which it has been necessary to meet in new ways. There have been arbitrary and exacting conditions imposed by the financial and architectural phases of the new building — conditions that have never arisen before in architecture or in building.

A condition placed upon the sky-scraper at the start was that it should rise vertically, for practically its whole height, without receding from or protruding over its street line. The building laws of the city would not permit of the latter, and the value of space would not allow of the former. To recede from the line with stories or columns or windows, or to taper away at the top in any form, would be to lose the very space sought to be gained. Of course, the insistence upon the vertical line from street to cornice meant an enforced monotony in the wall space. How should the architect overcome that difficulty?

Nothing in the architecture of the past seemed of any practical service in planning this new building. In fact, historic precedent was, and still is, something of a stumbling block in sky-scraper construction. The alluring Greek temple with its waste of space in projecting portico and columns, the cathedral with tapering spires and towers, the pyramid with receding platforms, were not the proper models. Breaking the structure into three pieces on the principle of a column, with foundation, wall space, and cornice corresponding to base, shaft, and capital, again would not answer. Even the campanile principle, though pointing the way, was just a little beside the mark. The very nature of the structure with its space-saving requirements fought all of the old forms.

Not but what they were tried, and some of them still



PL. 27. — WEST STREET BUILDING

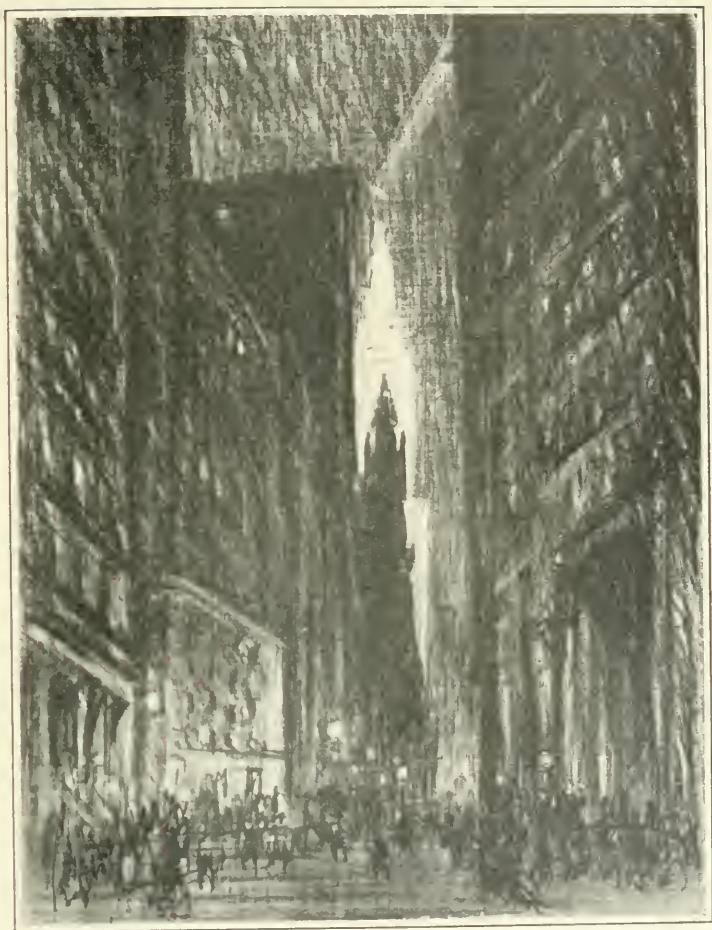


in process of trying. Venetian palaces were elongated, Roman arches were drawn out of all recognition, Norman castles rose to phenomenal heights; but these contorted structures were far from satisfactory. The majority of the buildings, however, rather held by the three-part principle of Roman or Renaissance architecture, with the base, shaft, and capital of the column as controlling motives. In the average sky-scraper of this latter type one or more stories of the basement were heavily constructed or pushed out as a foot, a projecting cornice was used to emphasize the roof, and the intermediate space was broken with ornamental string-courses, bayed windows, high pilasters, or columns upholding ox-bowed windows covering several floors in height. This was little more than an adding-up or a pulling-out of the ordinary four-story building. It was, moreover, a strain at holding the building together; and, by the use of the horizontal line emphasizing the separate stories, it was an attempt to minimize the height. In other words, the architect was apologetic about his building; he was trying to make people believe it was not such a bridge truss on end, not such a sky-scraper, after all.

This proved something of a mistake, and New York learned (or is in process of learning), of its mistake from Chicago. The credit of devising a better design belongs to the western architects. Instead of deprecating the height of the steel building, they emphasized it by using

the vertical instead of the horizontal line. The foot of the building was made only a slight projection, the cornice was cut down or changed into a railing or balcony that sometimes hid the roof, and the intermediate space was broken by climbing pilasters, corresponding in size to string-courses or half-round mouldings, that divided the windows up and down instead of across. The vertical line, instead of fighting the height of the building, accented it, gave it aspiration, dignity, and withal lightness and a semblance of honesty — the very things in which the first sky-scrapers were lacking.

The West Street Building, designed by Mr. Cass Gilbert, is a good example of the more modern structure using the vertical instead of the horizontal line. The effect of it is to carry the eye upward, to increase the height; and, finally, to allow definition to be lost in a mystery of ornamental window caps, cornices, and terra-cotta pinnacles. Perhaps there are too many of the latter in Mr. Gilbert's building; but then, ornament has from the beginning been something of a snare to the sky-scraper architect. If applied just for diversion, it is usually bad. There is ordinarily too much of it — too much variety as well as quantity — and it is perfectly apparent to the passer-by that it is put on merely to break the sameness of the façade. It is good only when it helps out the construction or the architectural conception. If a series of columns, or jutting string-courses, or ribs of stone, or



PL. 28. — SINGER BUILDING — EARLY EVENING





embayed windows can be used with architectural significance, they may be very successful. So, again, there may be a proper ornamental filling of space in decorated cornices, or sculptured keystones or geometrical arabesques; but there is always danger lurking in them — the danger of destroying solidity and simplicity by too much tracery and garnishment.

There is the possibility of error, too, in the choice of stone or terra-cotta or brick or other weather-shield material used for the walls. The earlier attempts at producing an appearance of solid stone-walls, by deceitful veneers of granite or cement pilasters, were never good. Just now there is a disposition, or a desire, at least, upon the part of the architects, to exploit the airiness of the steel structure; but they are at some loss to know just how this shall be done. The Eiffel Tower gives the desired effect, but it would not make an office building; it is not enclosed. The Singer Building is an enclosed tower, but the quantity of glass used to enclose it, perhaps, makes it look too fragile.

Again, in the treatment of the wall space between foot and cap there comes to the architect the question of color. How can this be employed to break the vertical monotony? Can tiles, or terra-cotta, or different-hued bricks be used effectively in geometrical patterns? Is it desirable or practicable to have the walls painted? Given several hundred feet of upright wall broken only by

windows and pilasters, and what is to be done with it? How shall you make it look attractive and yet dignified?

All these questions are asked and answered in an individual way about every new steel building that is sent up. It has been generally assumed that the builders of the sky-scrapers were money-makers pure and simple, — men after the dollar and caring nothing for appearances, — but such is not the case. They, with their architects and engineers, are very much concerned with the æsthetic side, and wish their buildings to please the eye from without as well as to fill the pocket-book from within. Good form with color and ornamentation are things sought for. The attempt to produce them, which is apparent in almost every high building in the city, is sufficient evidence of the desire to have them. Admitting failure with them in many cases, and still success in perhaps as many more cases, shows that they are possibilities, and that eventually they will become established actualities.

But the worry of the public, and the critics, and our returned compatriots, is perhaps centered less on the architecture (or its lack) in the new buildings, than on their incongruity when seen with the old buildings. They do not belong to the same school or style or epoch; they break in upon the present arrangement with a disagreeable jar. And yet, it is still within the memory of man that similar things were said about the tall towers of the Brooklyn Bridge. They, too, were once "hideous";

but gradually as the city has grown up to them they have become orderly, contiguous, related, affiliated. Eventually, perhaps, the new buildings will not be out of harmony with the old, because there will be little of the old left.

Not that New York is to become an unbroken stretch of sky-scrapers. Many of the larger and older structures will undoubtedly remain. Not that all the tall buildings will be of a size, a style, or a color. There will be as great a variety in them as in the buildings they have superseded. And just as many inconsistencies along the line of contact. Why not? What strange theory of civic art taught us that uniformity in buildings made the city beautiful? It sometimes makes the dull city, as Madrid, for instance; but it never made the wonder and surprise of Buda-Pesth, nor the unique charm of London. Variety does not mean necessarily antagonism. The Gothic does not clash with the Renaissance except in the theory of the partisan advocate. The Piazzeta at Venice is one of the most charming spots architecturally in all Europe, but what a variety of styles are grouped about it — the Byzantine S. Marco, the Gothic Doge's Palace, the classic Library of Sansovino, the mediæval campanile, the composite Loggetta! One by one as these structures went up, there were doubtless Venetians who groaned in spirit and declared the last addition to be the ruin of the city architecturally; but time has proved them wrong. There is no incongruity or want of harmony in the group.

Nor will there be incongruity in the buildings of the new New York, save as people for purposes of advertisement or through absurdity, perpetrate the bizarre or the ridiculous. There is, to be sure, a sharp contrast between, say, the Metropolitan Life Building with its tall tower on Madison Square and the small green-and-yellow version of a Roman temple near by that is doing service as a Christian church. Both buildings are new and bad enough — the one in its want of proportion and its over-ornamentation, the other in its mixed imitation of the Roman Pantheon and the Künstler-Haus at Buda-Pesth. The larger one will possibly some day be blurred and blended by weathering until it fits in the square and meets the structures about it. Nor will the smaller one fail as a picturesque foil to its surroundings; but it will always be a terra-cotta protest against its marble neighbor, a green frog railing at a white giraffe. It was put forth to attract attention — and it does it.

But, aside from advertising and fads of fashion, there is no reason why different styles of architecture should not harmonize with each other; and this, too, without any preconceived plan to meet and match. The idea that a square or street or city needs to be exactly scaled and designed that its buildings should not quarrel, is the latest theory of civic artists; and, no doubt, if an agreement as to style and plan could be reached by all the land-owners of a given space, the result might be more uniform. Yet

there is danger in the exact plan. Such a uniformity with monotony is still visible on some of the side streets of up-town New York where the old blocks of brown-stone fronts remain. Berlin is built somewhat in that style, and there are many miles of Paris that are deadly dull because wanting in variety.

But the question is wholly academic. In a democratic city like New York people will build as suits their individual interests; and after all there is compensation in that. The great majority of squares and streets and towns — those that we admire to-day — were not planned. One thing after another was pushed in to fill a need, first a tower, then a church, then a town-hall, or a monument; until finally a Piazza del Duomo, a Dresden Theater-Platz, or even an English Oxford, was the result. This grouping by necessity or for convenience has in the past proved quite as good, and even more interesting than the rectilinear laying out of a Louvre, or the formal grandeur of a Viennese Franzen-Ring. At least the result is not stilted, icily regular, splendidly null. It has the appearance of something constructed for use, not for looks, and it also suggests the story of progress.<sup>1</sup>

The future will no doubt see the same law of use,

<sup>1</sup> That there are arguments for the formal city is not questioned. I myself have elsewhere used them. But why not admit that there may be arguments for the informal city also? It is the old contention of the classic against the romantic, of form against color. But why not beauty in both?

unconsciously perhaps, producing harmony in the open places and the long streets of New York. The tall units that, one by one, are being placed in the Plaza, at the entrance to the Central Park, will tone down in color, run over and intertwine in line, group together as masses, until all are but parts of a whole. And it will be the same with Madison and Union squares, with Fifth Avenue and Broadway. In the lower city the massed effect of the high buildings can already be felt. The unity of the new city is indicated there for those who have the imagination to see it. Unity but not uniformity. There is, and will continue to be, the saving grace of variety.

## ANCIENT LANDMARKS







PL. VIII.—THE CITY HALL AND WORLD BUILDING

PL. VIII. THE CITY HALL AND WORLD BUILDING





## CHAPTER VIII

### ANCIENT LANDMARKS

THERE is still a further objection urged to the sky-scraper upbuilding of the new city. It requires a tearing down of the old city; and against that there are always voices enough to cry out in protest. Not that there is any great value, æsthetic or otherwise, to the old; but, because it has become familiar, and has perhaps some pleasant associations connected with it, people would like to see it preserved. Then, too, with the passing of the old buildings history loses its landmarks. We can no longer tell where Wouter Van Twiller smoked the pipe of peace, or Peter Stuyvesant pounded his wooden leg on the floor with wrath, or where stood the Collect Pond with the island in the middle of it, or where ran the Dutch wall from which Wall Street derived its name. Mr. James says that on his last visit here he could not even find the houses where certain celebrated men—poets, painters, and the like—were born, and which he knew as a boy! He thinks the spots should have been marked or commemorated in some way; but how could one put a tablet on a twenty-story sky-scraper!

This protest of history or sentiment has always been made in the past as in the present, and has usually been unheeded. The world goes right on tearing down and building up anew, on the principle that its counting-room is only a shop; that when its machinery wears out or becomes inadequate, it shall be superseded by other and better machinery; and when the shop itself becomes too small, it shall be torn down and a larger one put in its place. Thus acted on occasion the ancient Greeks and Romans, and thus act the modern New Yorkers. The commercial keynote of New York is again sharply struck. The city is a shop, not a historical museum in the large, like present-day Venice. Moreover, the past history of the city is wholly insignificant when compared with its present commercial importance. Its impetus, its movement forward, are not to be checked by a Fraunce's Tavern or a Poc's cottage or even a Washington or Hamilton headquarters. If historical buildings are still useful or beautiful in themselves, like the City Hall or Old Trinity, no one will question the propriety of retaining them; but the fact that tradition attaches to them is not sufficient in itself for their preservation. If tradition always had its way, the dead past would never bury its dead, and the modern city would be a rubbish heap like Bagdad or Damascus.

As it is, the reverence for antiquity has resulted in many of the older cities being choked with their own ashes.

THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
SOCIETY LIBRARY



PL. 29. — TRINITY CHURCH YARD



Rome is full of broken-down brick baths, belonging once to the Cæsars as now to the tourists, that have not one saving virtue of use or beauty to commend them. In Florence a great wail was sent skyward when modern buildings superseded the ancient quarters where heroes and heroines of fiction were supposed to have lived — quarters which were no better than the old ghetto of Rome. And in London, if a radical should suggest a new bridge over the Thames to take the place of any one of the half-dozen inconvenient and deadly commonplace structures that now span the stream, there would be violent protests in the name of history and romance from Ruskinians and Harrisonians.

All this seems to the modern who appreciates the impossibility of stopping human progress (or change, if the word be preferred) a waste of good sentiment and enthusiasm. An object gathers value not for its age, but for its use or beauty. The Pantheon, the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence, the Ducal Palace at Venice are beautiful, not because they are old, but in spite of it; just as the pictures by Titian and Giorgione are the worse for their years rather than bettered by them. The idea that everything savoring of age must of necessity be good is absurd. Yet it is, nevertheless, an idea widely entertained. We in America have it in almost every household. It is our fancy for things ancient, more than for things beautiful, that induces us to lift marble mantels from Venetian palaces and to

place them in Fifth Avenue houses, to hang our walls with tapestries from France and pictures from Italy and Holland, to cover our floors with Daghestan rugs, and to put in our drawing-rooms worm-eaten chairs from Paris and Nuremberg. Their inappropriateness in their new western setting is glozed over by the statement that they are "very old," — a statement which might, with equal pertinence if less interest, be made about any pudding-stone from the neighboring hills.

Naturally, with such notions plaguing our shallow minds, there are a plenty of shrill voices to cry out against the tearing down of a square stone box that happens to have been built before the Revolution, though it may have no architectural grace about it. Indeed, it is conceivable that a future generation may grow lachrymose over the demolition of that one-time architectural horror, the New York Post-Office. And why not, if age is to be the criterion of value? It will soon be one of the oldest of the downtown structures, and probably has more romance and history about it than all the sky-scraper put together. But originally it never had much reason for existence, being neither very useful nor very beautiful; and now it is merely an encumbrance that has been kept too long from the scrap heap. If a building has any real value in use or beauty, there is little difficulty about its being preserved.

There are very few landmarks down in the busy quarter of the town that justify themselves, — that give reason for

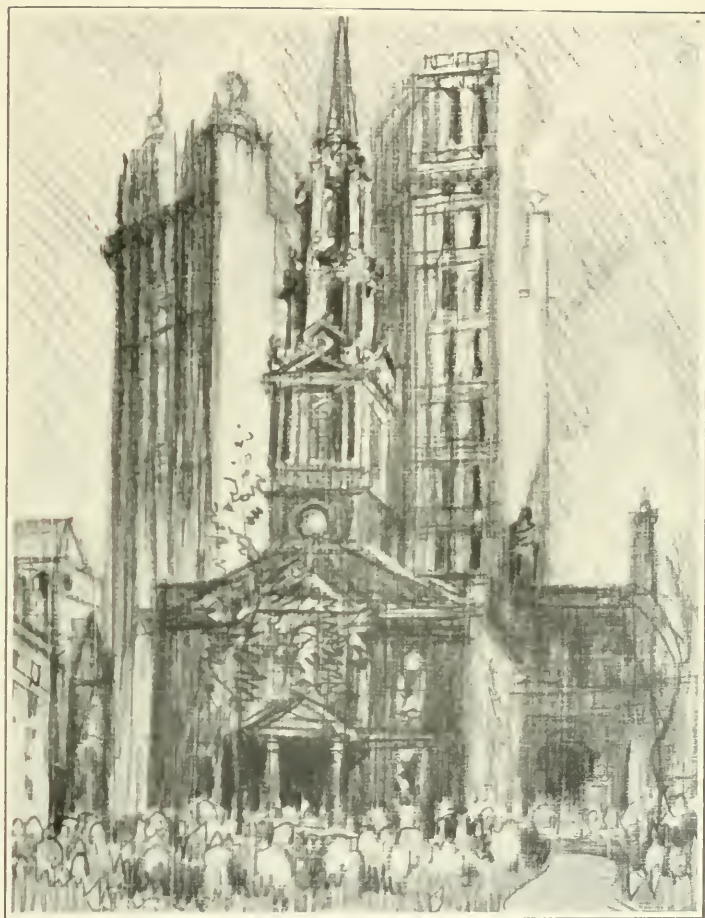
their continued existence. These few are somewhat like sunken reefs in the sea with the great wave-like cornices of the sky-scraper apparently breaking above them, almost over them. They are weather-worn, water-worn, doomed to destruction; but for the present, perhaps, they serve a purpose as beauty, if they are not very useful. Old Trinity is one of the most famous of these survivals. With its trees and grass and graves, its glint of sunshine and its breath of air, it lies like a benediction upon the heart of the busy lower city. It is something to please the eye and calm the fevered brain, for a moment at least; and the thousands of the worried and the harried that push and surge along Broadway look through and over the iron fence and are helped by the peace and quiet of it. That alone is sufficient excuse for its being. Besides, there is the beauty of the church itself to lend one for a moment a surcease of business and a suggestion of another phase of life — something not to be despised in these piping times of commerce.

But Trinity — church and parish school and crumbling graves — is submerged, sunken as it were beneath the surrounding buildings. It seems and looks a relic not destined to last for long. It is already somewhat out of place, its congregation do not live within sound of its bells, and those that lie under the sod have no longer close kindred that walk about the graves after service and keep watch over the tombs and the headstones. Broadway

frets at it; Wall Street bombards it with noisy people; Church Street roars at it with elevated trains above and lumbering trucks below; and its own corporation puts up a lofty sky-scraper to look down upon the cross of the steeple. It seems as though they all longed to rush in upon it and strangle it.

Fifty years ago that brown-stone steeple, lifting high in the air, dominated all lower New York. It was the one tall tower on the island, and its bells rang out across the waters and were heard over in Brooklyn and in New Jersey. Then it was an aspiring needle pointing heavenward and, if it soared far above the commercial buildings scattered about its feet, it but symbolized the predominance, at that time, of the spiritual over the material. It had not then outlived its purpose. Its congregation was within call of its bells, its parish school had children to educate, it was still a place where people were baptized and married and buried. Serene and beautiful and sanctified it all seemed, resting there under the blue sky with the peace of God upon it.

But now what! The old order has changed, giving place to new. The church on the green seems like a church in an area-way, and the clear sweet bells that once sounded over the rivers now reverberate with a clang from the high walls about them, or at times have a muffled, strangled cry, like that of a bell-buoy overridden by stormy seas. The congregation, shrunken to small proportions, comes



PL. 30.—ST. PAUL'S AND PARK ROW BUILDING

THE LIBRARY OF THE  
NEW-YORK SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS

over from Brooklyn by bridge or tunnel, or down from the upper town with a rush by elevated or subway. As for marriage and burial there, they are now rare occurrences; and the children — the only children left in that part of the city — belong to the janitors' families, many of them by birth of an alien denomination.

Alas, fair Trinity! With all its beauty it is only a survival. Its usefulness as a church is gone and it lags superfluous on the scene. Everyone will be sorry to see it go, for it has been for many years a lovely spot of brown and green upon the gray. But commerce is beating upon it and wearing it away. Eventually it will succumb.

One cannot but feel the same way about St. Paul's. It was begun in 1764 and completed (all except the steeple) in two years. Broadway was not then considered a great thoroughfare; indeed, it was only a lane, and St. Paul's turned its back upon it, facing toward the North River. There was a fine view then from the simple little porch down to a sandy beach, and beyond it bright waves flashing in the sunlight; but now the beach has disappeared, the river has been much filled in, and St. Paul's faces the elevated road and near it office buildings rising in ranks and flights upward and outward. Originally it was (is still) a chapel of Trinity Church, and was the third church building erected by the English in New York, but it is now the oldest church structure in the city. Again, it is entitled to survive. It is like Trinity, a spot of verdure



in the waste, and it would be a pity to see it disappear. Yet what shall save it? It was only yesterday that St. John's in Varick Street (built in 1803) was threatened and then temporarily spared. What shall save St. Paul's?

A little more shut in, a little more protected from assault, is the City Hall. The group of county buildings at the back, the General Post-Office in front, stand as buffers, and the small park about it seems to hold off invasion year by year; but the sky-scrapers near at hand — the lofty towers of the Park Row Building, the gilded dome of the *World* that repeats the City Hall cupola on a colossal scale of impudence, the massive squares and uprights of masonry on Broadway — seem to look over and glare at it as wondering what it is doing there. And, true enough, what does it there? It is like some fair lady clad in a ball dress of pale silk, standing in the dust and dirt of the noisy street. It is too delicate, too lovely, too feminine, for contact with those great structures of steel and granite. To-day, after its recent cleaning, the white marble shows an old ivory coloring, and the yellow window-shades are as a note of gold upon the ivory. The delicacy of proportions in windows, columns, and cupola, the fineness of decoration over doors and along string-courses, the fastidious simplicity of the wings, are all so marked as to create the impression of a casket in ivory. It is not coarse enough or bulky enough for such a place. A building



of, say, forty stories would not be too big to dominate the office structures about the City Hall Park. It is a curatorial thought that creeps into one's head in looking at the little City Hall — the thought that the whole building ought to be picked up and put in some museum. Yet worse things than that may happen to it.

It was not so long ago that this beautiful building was erected. McComb, its architect, had completed the more robust Queens Building at Rutgers in 1811, and the next year the City Hall was finished. The park was then the outskirts of the city, and the New Yorkers of that time had such small idea of the city's growth to the north that the rear walls of the new building were carried up in brown-stone instead of marble. It has been said that this was economy, and not a question of the extent of the future city; but the fact that all the economy was used on the rear wall is significant. McComb and his contemporaries had as little thought that ten miles of solid buildings would grow up back of the brown-stone walls as Wouter Van Twiller and his Dutch compatriots that their clearing in the woods, where cattle were rounded up in the autumn, would some day become a park dominated by McComb's fine building.

What swift and sudden transitions! The changes of a hundred years are almost inconceivable. Have we now reached the limit of mutation? Are things to stand still hereafter and the ivory-hued City Hall to remain

unchanged, attesting to the future generations the sense of proportion, the simple beauty of materials, the chasteness of ornamentation, employed by the forefathers? The chances are against it. Why? Because the building has outlived its usefulness. It is still occupied, but it is not convenient, and its mere beauty is not strong enough plea to save it from destruction. It has been menaced more than once by political parties in power, and eventually it is almost sure to be sacrificed.

If such a fate should overtake the Aquarium (formerly Castle Garden), there would be few mourners. It has no beauty about it, and the only thing that is saving it just now is its enforced use. It makes a fairly decent building for an aquarium, and besides it is isolated in Battery Park and no one is crying for the land it occupies. Some associations and traditions cling about it and lend a scrap of romance to it. It started into life in 1811 as Fort Clinton and was then situated on a tiny island lying off Battery Park. In 1822, or thereabouts, it ceased to be a fort and was turned into a place of amusement, where Jenny Lind first sang when she came to America, and Lafayette and Kossuth were publicly received and welcomed. In a few years the playhouse had turned into a station for the reception of immigrants from the Old World, and in 1896 it was fitted up as an aquarium. It now houses the finest collection of fishes in the world, but it has almost completely lost its old character. Instead of covering a tiny

island it rests bedded in the stone slabs of Battery Park and looks somewhat like a half-sunken gas tank. Sentiment may cling about it, and the folk with neither New York ancestry nor history may reverence it because it is so "very old"; but in reality it is sad rubbish and has little place in the new city.

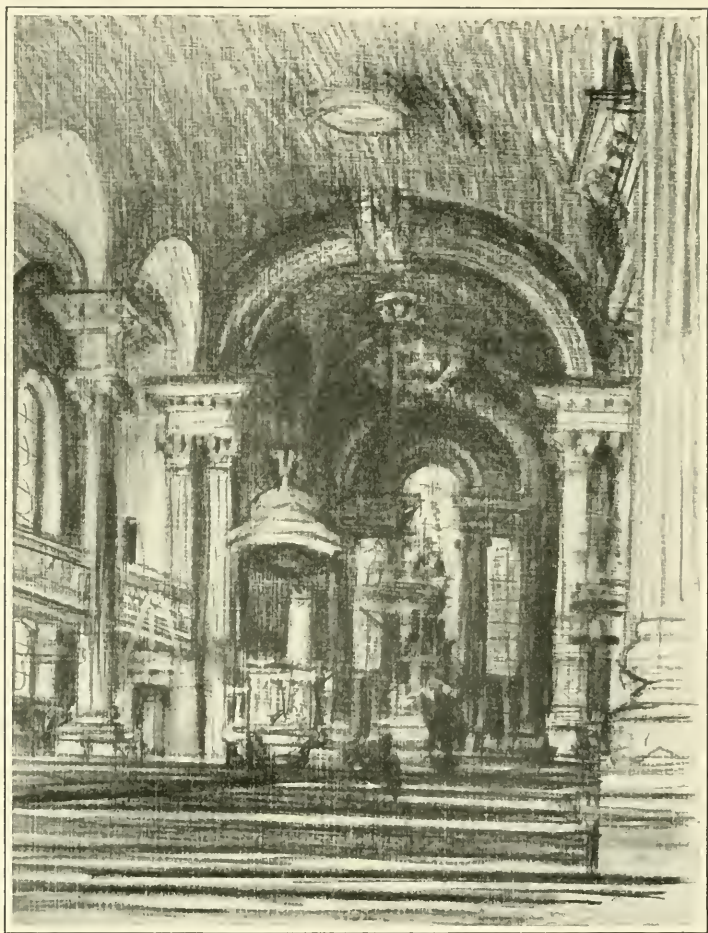
There is not a building in lower New York that goes back to the time of the Dutch occupation, and very few that belong to the later English occupation. The streets remain, but their original designers would not recognize them, so great has been the change. Tablets commemorating historic sites have been placed on the new buildings; but, again, those who participated and made the history would never know the places thereof. What seventeenth-century Dutchman, could he wake up, would recognize in the ponderous new Custom House the site of the old Dutch fort in New Amsterdam; or in Beaver Street the beaver trail leading over into the marsh now called Broad Street; or in Wall Street the place where the wall to keep out invading foes was erected; or in Broadway the Heere Straat, which in 1665 was remarkable for containing twenty-one buildings? The burghers in pot hats and bag breeches that wandered along Perel-Straat (Pearl Street) when it was the water-line of the East River, and the faithful huis-vrouws in balloon skirts that chattered along the cow path (Beekman Street) leading through the Beekman farm up to the (City Hall) park would never be

able to orient themselves in the new New York. The Dutch past seems to have been completely wiped off the map.

American antiquity has, at best, some very positive limitations. Most of the things we call "old" are within the memory of men still living. The pile of Doric-shaped granite on Wall and Broad streets, now doing service as a Sub-Treasury, stands where formerly stood the City Hall in which Washington was inaugurated first President of the Republic. The old building was torn down in 1813 and later on the present building was erected. No one knows how long this one will last. Nothing endures for any length of time in this commercial center. The Astor House, a granite hotel in the same class as the Sub-Treasury, is again only "old" to Americans. It has about fifty years, and will probably never see three-score and ten.

A much older hostelry than the Astor House — in fact one of the oldest buildings in New York — is Fraunce's Tavern, standing on the southwest corner of Broad and Pearl streets. It was originally the residence of Etienne de Lancey, and was built in 1725. It was the fashionable tavern of New York in its day. Here the New York Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1768, here Washington had his headquarters after the British evacuation of New York, and here on December 4, 1783, the great captain said farewell to his officers. The building is not





PL. 31. — ST. PAUL'S — INTERIOR



"a wonder and delight" architecturally, not at all in the class with Trinity or the City Hall; but it illustrates a page of history that all Americans are proud to read. In consequence of that, perhaps, and in response to a public appeal, the city government tried to buy Fraunce's Tavern with the idea of its preservation as a museum; but finally, by mutual agreement, the Society of the Sons of the Revolution purchased the property and have restored it. Such a very unworldly, unbusinesslike performance as that might have been expected of Paris, but hardly of New York. Still, everyone seems to acquiesce. One hesitates to suggest that the acquiescence is due somewhat to indifference as well as sentiment. The old tavern is removed from the center of business activity. If it stood on the corner of Wall Street and Broadway, there might have been a different tale to tell.

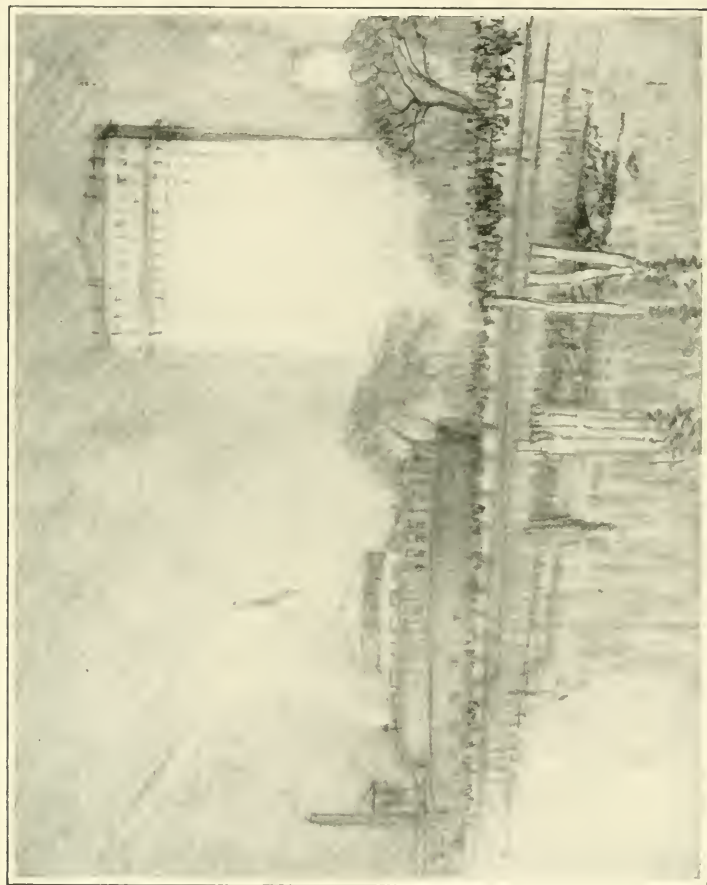
Perhaps the "historic mansions" in the upper part of the city, along Riverside Drive and the Fort Washington district, have survived to the present day for the reason, again, that their room is not actively needed. Alexander Hamilton's house, "The Grange," near One Hundred and Forty-Second Street and Convent Avenue, is one of the most notable of those that remain. It was from here that Hamilton went forth in the morning of July 11, 1804, to fight the fatal duel with Aaron Burr. The shadow of Burr also fell on the old Jumel mansion, still standing on One Hundred and Sixtieth Street; but before his

day it held Mrs. Roger Morris, who, as Mary Philipse, was the first love of Washington. In 1776 Washington made it his headquarters, and from it Nathan Hale sallied forth to get information within the British lines, and never came back. In the Van Cortlandt Park still stands the old Van Cortlandt mansion built in 1748, and now used as a museum of history by the Colonial Dames. The old mills that belonged to the place are there yet (or were a few years ago), and the mill-pond is now used by skaters in the winter season.

So one might go on, recounting perhaps a dozen places in the upper city that have a century of story attached to them of a more or less romantic nature. Interesting, and in view of our abbreviated history, a little pathetic, are these reminders of the past. The scarcity of them seems to emphasize our want of feeling about things historic. We appear ruthless, destructive, unsympathetic. And yet, after all, what has New York to do with romance or the past? The most important page of its biography is now open and being written upon. As for sentiment, there is plenty of it among New Yorkers, but they are indisposed to mix it with business. Sentiment and history are in the same category with literature and the arts, merely secondary considerations, — things to be cultivated like potted plants in factory windows provided they do not interfere in any way with the light or the working of the machinery.



THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
AND  
ZOOLOGY  
OF THE  
CITY OF NEW YORK



PL. 32. — THE AQUARIUM, BATTERY PARK

Harsh facts! And perhaps better kept in the background or at least passed over in silence. And yet why? There is nothing discreditable about commercialism.<sup>1</sup> Material prosperity is what the world, in all times and in all places, has been struggling for. The necessities of life are the prerequisites of the luxuries. No city ever did much with art and literature until it had solved the fiscal question. And New York simply happens to be a better struggler — a better breadwinner — than any of its predecessors. One would not care for its prevailing idea, its commercial intensity, everywhere and all over the United States. Business can be, and has been, done to death many times. But why not commerce dominant in this city by the sea which is so admirably fitted for that very thing?

<sup>1</sup> After writing "The Money God," I shall not be accused of unduly favoring commercialism. It has its iniquities, and produces a strange mania almost everywhere; but it also has its necessities and its excellences. In "The Money God," I recited the former, and I have no notion of apologizing for now reciting the latter. There are two sides to every case.



# THE EBB TIDE

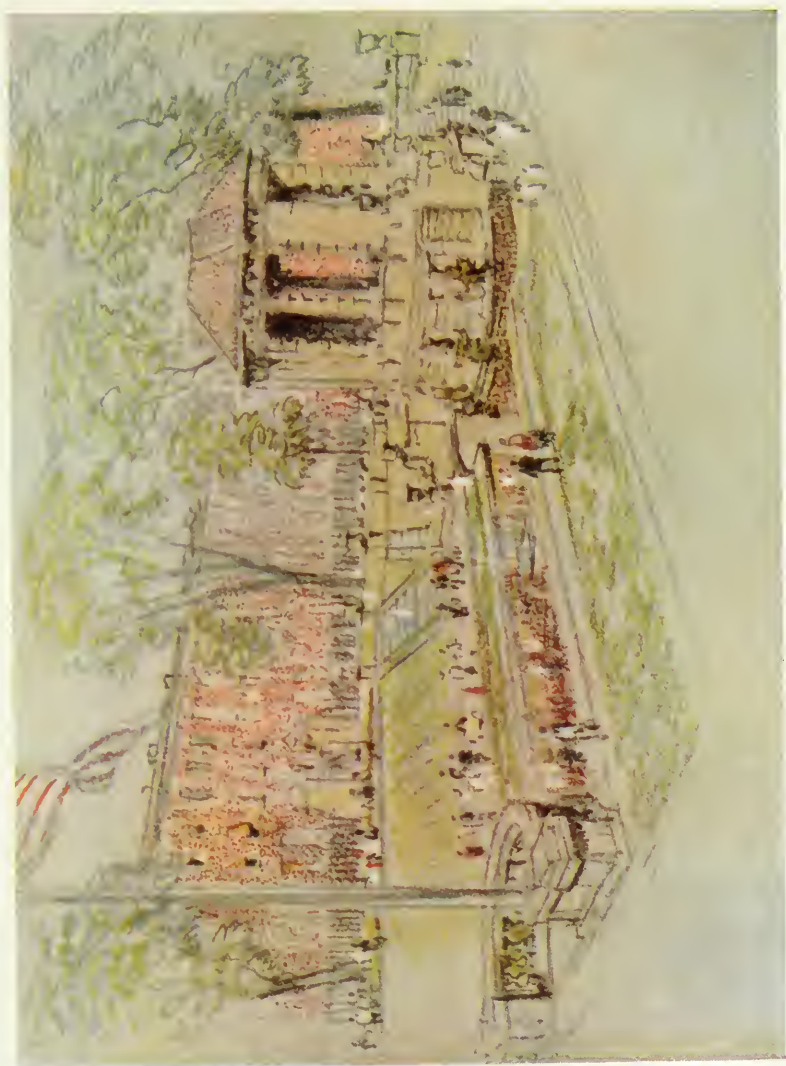


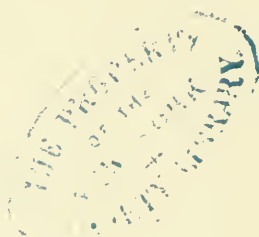


PL. IX. — HUDSON PARK (GREENWICH)









## CHAPTER IX

### THE EBB TIDE

THREE o'clock is the hour when the heaped-up people in the lower city begin to move outward again. That is the time when the exchanges close. No more large operations can be carried on that day — at least not on the exchanges — and the operators begin to think of going up town, or “out home” in New Jersey or Long Island or along the Sound. It is the turn of the tide, and from then until six or seven o'clock, the human stream flows outward, seeking the places whence it came in the morning. The little men — the book-keepers, clerks, messengers, and office-boys — are usually the last to go. A day does not mean for them from ten to three; and long after the presidents, directors, and members of the firm have disappeared, the window-frames of lights up in the tall buildings show where the clerical force is still at work, straightening out the day's books and business.

The movement outward in the afternoon is substantially a repetition of the morning movement. The more prominent or more wealthy men, to avoid publicity or unwished-for companionship or idle curiosity on the part

of the throng, leave their offices "hurriedly" (at least they always do in newspaper reports) in cabs or automobiles. They are "whirled off up town" (according to the newspapers again), which means that they frequently join in a slow procession up Broadway in the wake of some heavily loaded truck that obstructs the thoroughfare. As for the rank and file, long platoons of them disappear down the side streets toward the ferries or tunnels, hawked at and howled at by newsboys, collar-button men, and peddlers of oranges and peanuts. Once more the hurrying throng finds its way around boxes and barrels, circles about upright showcases standing on the sidewalk, or pitches over steps and iron gratings until finally the advance guard disappears in the ferry-houses or tunnel entrances.

Other contingents move in other directions and keep disappearing down subway steps, like pieces of coal running down a chute. The Broadway cars groan with people fore and aft, the elevated stations and trains are congested to the danger point, the sidewalks overflow into the street with those who are working along toward the Bridge entrance and the cars to Brooklyn. For several hours these crowds of people keep coming down and out of the tall buildings, as though the supply at the fountain-head were inexhaustible. Where they all come from is as much of a wonder at night as where they all go to is in the morning.

What is the need for the "rush" at night since business is through for the day? There is nothing ahead but dinner and sleep. Why not "take it slowly"? There is only one answer to this. It is not in the American make-up to take matters slowly. After business hours there are plenty of things to do, and even if they be only play things yet must they be done energetically. The New Yorker works at his play—drives as hard at his amusements or his meals as he might at a new enterprise on the exchange. Leisure is a novel word in his vocabulary. He will devote as many hours to golf, perhaps, as to work, but he will not go about it leisurely unless very old or very ill. Up town, down town, or out at the country club the game has to be played in a businesslike manner.

Those who make up the "rush" at evening all have very definite ideas as to why they are rushing. Some are going up to the hotels to carry on the same shop talk they have just left behind. There are enterprises canvassed, and orders taken to sell or buy, in the lobbies of the up-town hotels as well as in the offices down town; and a very lively stock business is carried on in West Thirty-Third Street after the exchanges on Broad Street have closed and sunk into darkness. Some drop into clubs to play billiards, or to chat with acquaintances, or to fight a bag, or to have a game of squash and get a swim afterward. Some, again, are bound for open-air exercise at out-of-town clubs, or riding, or driving in the park. A thousand forms

of amusement, or ways of putting in a couple of hours before dinner, offer themselves to different minds. There are those, even among busy men, who to oblige wife or kindred drop in at teas on the way home, or go to art galleries to see pictures, or stop in a library to read some new book. Of course, the great body of the clerical force, when it gets a chance, scorns all these more effeminate forms of enjoyment and goes to the ball game, sits on the bleachers, and roars its approbation or displeasure at the various players.

There is still another class, of those living on the island and doing business in the lower city, that gets some rational enjoyment and exercise out of its late afternoon hours. This is the class that walks up town — young men of high spirits walking in pairs, middle-aged people of full blood in need of exercise, leisurely old men out for the air and a stroll. Stick in hand and with eyes open for all that passes, they march up past the Astor House, look across at MacMonnies' "Nathan Hale," sniff the citified trees in the little park, and feel perhaps some civic pride tugging at the buttons of their waistcoat at sight of the City Hall. The tumult and the roar of the street usually do not bother them. It is remarkable how dead the sense of hearing becomes to accustomed sounds. Occasionally a person drops off into a side street, leaving the high buildings and the noise of Broadway behind him; but that is not necessarily because of the noise. On the

side streets there are unusual sights to be seen. Some of the corners and buildings and little parks there seem to have slight relation to the things of the great thoroughfares, and the people there care nothing about business on the exchanges, and know nothing about the commerce or life of the lower city.

The East Side of the city is an illustration to the point, and its streets and people are interesting to look at if one does not mix in too much of the social question with his walk. Superficially regarded, the people who dwell there seem happy enough. They talk and chatter on the stoops while the children play in the gutter, and outwardly there is little sign of woe. Then, too, the gay colors in the costumes, carts, and shop-fronts lend a liveliness which is not exactly a mask. The empty-headed ones really are quite content, quite happy. They live in the present, taking no thought for the morrow; and, perhaps, have never known any different or better life.

There are dozens of ways by which the East Side may be reached, but for the man walking up town after business hours the easiest route is by way of Park Row. After passing City Hall Park and the newspaper offices, with their afternoon crowds, there is a swift change of houses and people. A hundred yards beyond the Bridge entrance is sufficient to land one in the region of pawn shops, cheap clothing-stores, small brick buildings, and collarless citizens. The nationality is not here very



pronounced, but becomes more so as you near Chatham Square. Just off the square to the east there is a forlorn-looking scrap of ground on a terrace that may suggest the dominant race. It is an old Jewish cemetery (Beth Haim), and the tablet on the iron gate proclaims it the oldest of its kind in New York, it having been purchased in 1681. It is no longer in use, save as a receptacle for rubbish, flung over the fence or from the back windows of the tenements that look out upon it. Even its sunlight is in measure shut out by the strings of laundry that hang high above it almost every day in the week. But all the Jews of the quarter are not under its sod. Any street now that leads to the east will plunge you at once into the ghettos. There are nearly a million Jews in New York and it requires no still-hunt to find them.

But the sights of the ghettos are not exactly pleasure-giving, and perhaps a less depressing view of our foreign population can be had in the streets west of the Bowery and east of Broadway. Turn then to the left at Chatham Square and enter Doyers Street. In twenty-five steps you are in Chinatown — quite another world. The old New York buildings with iron balconies have been transformed by signs, symbols, and banners into something Oriental; the shop windows glitter with Chinese trinkets, fabrics, porcelains; and across the way is the one-time Barnum Museum, refitted and redecorated to make the Chinese Theater of to-day. The curved street has its quota



of celestials, standing in store fronts, loitering along the sidewalks, or chatting with one another — almost all of them in native costumes. Behind the doors and windows you get an occasional glimpse of Chinese wives and mothers; and in the doorways there are Chinese babies playing on the floor.

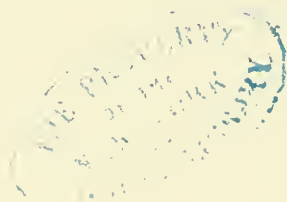
Chinatown is a small but rather exclusive little spot, embracing Doyers, Pell, and the lower end of Mott streets — only two or three blocks. There one has a whole city in miniature — Chinese hotels, restaurants, shops, offices, banks, “joints,” what you will. The Chinese are quite undisturbed in their possession, save by the Italians who crowd in upon them and, in measure, live with them. The Italians are about the only neighboring nationality that will do this. The Jews are close at hand but will not affiliate. They hold aloof. Nevertheless all three nationalities touch elbows as you move up Mott Street and come to Bayard Street. The Italians now dominate, though Chinamen are seen; but the Jews hold the end of the next parallel street to Mott (Elizabeth), and crowd through Bayard toward Mott. In fact, the foot of Elizabeth Street is the great East Side clothing market of the Jews. There trousers and coat brokers, with goods upon their arms, move along the streets and make sales in the saloons, which are the chief exchanges. The modest charge of the saloon is that after each sale the seller must buy a drink. A thriving business is thus done by all parties concerned;

and the clothing curb is in consequence a lively and a much-sought place.

But the Jews stop at the junction of Bayard Street with Mott. The upper part of Mott for many blocks is sacred to the Italians, as is also Elizabeth Street. Here one finds a repetition of the poorer quarters of Naples, with crowded tenements, hundreds of men and women, thousands of children. And hereabouts everything rings with color. Doyers and Pell streets are gay, but Mott Street is "loud." Especially is this true when there is a celebration of some saint's day, say, that of Saint Michael the Archangel. Then there will be a huge baldachino in gold and colors erected in front of some building, with awnings above and effigies of the Madonna and Child below; there will be a procession, with a band playing Italian airs, and rows of fire-crackers for many blocks that run up and explode with a tremendous blast in front of the Madonna; there will be prayers and ceremonies and goings-on for, perhaps, days at a time. During these celebrations all the doorsteps, windows, and balconies for blocks are thronged with people in bright dresses; there are flags and banners and festoonings in many colors; the curb below is lined with push carts showing brilliant-hued fruits, vegetables, or dry-goods; while scarlet and violet and saffron shawls and shirts go by in bands and bunches. The color is more astonishing than Naples itself.



PL. 33. — POST OFFICE FROM ST. PAUL'S PORCH



One emerges from Mott Street with his impressions somewhat confused. It is a strange tangle of people, shops, signs, carts; and yet out of it all comes perhaps a vivid recollection of a quaint old New York doorway with fluted wooden columns and a wrought-iron railing to the stoop, or a fine old church with square tower and heavy stone-walls now being occupied by possibly two or three congregations of foreign extraction, or a new schoolhouse of excellent architecture and superb proportions put down here by the municipality to educate the children of these Italians in American ways. It is difficult, indeed, to realize that this is New York, so contradictory seems the scene, so unbelievable the mixture of the old and the new.

If one turns at the top of Mott Street through Houston Street to the east, crossing the Bowery to Second Avenue, he finds himself in the midst of another nationality, and surrounded by entirely different associations. It is the quarter of the Hungarians; and their shops, amusement halls, and houses are scattered hereabouts. It is a much better quarter than Mott Street — in fact, with its balconies and music, its cafés with potted shrubs and bits of grass, its houses with flowers on the window-sills and vines on the walls, it is very attractive. There is some reminder here of a Paris boulevard of the second class. Perhaps this is due to the presence of the “kave-haz” at every turn. The populace are devoted to the café with its sidewalk tables, and if one visits such a place as

the Cosmopolitan, he may fancy that all Hungary in America is devoted to chess, for it is played there all day and most of the night.

But here, again, on Second Avenue is the strange mingling of the old and the new. Hidden within the block of Second and Third streets on the west side of the avenue, with access to it cut off save by a grated passageway, lies the quiet and beautiful Marble Cemetery, which few people to-day ever see or hear about. It is a part of old New York, a chapter that is now closed and sealed and practically forgotten. Not half a block away, on the north side of Second Street moving toward First Avenue, is a larger Marble Cemetery, exposed to the street yet guarded by an iron fence—another quiet and beautiful spot of green, surrounded by tenements, crowded by newcomers, and yet holding under its sod some of the people of old New York, Robert Lenox, Thomas Addis Emmet, and their contemporaries. In the midst of a roar and a rabble, in an overcrowded section of the city, these clean and well-kept cemeteries not only please the eye, but impress one strangely by their unruffled calm, their abiding peace.

Something of the same feeling is produced by old St. Mark's at Second Avenue and Stuyvesant Street. The square brown church with its simple lines of roof and steeple, its fine porch and entrance, its green grass and (for New York) ample grounds, is very impressive, almost startling. Such things do not occur often in the city, and



PL. 34. — MOTT STREET







it is fortunate that St. Mark's still endures with its feeling of restfulness here in the troubled street by the noisy tenements. Counting by the new world calendar the church has stood for a long time. It is old — several generations old. On its site Peter Stuyvesant, last governor of New Amsterdam, caused to be built a chapel for the use of his neighbors and himself, who were living near by on their "bouweries." The chapel was in use in 1660; and in 1682 Stuyvesant died, and was buried in a vault beneath it. Afterwards the chapel was pulled down and in its place arose the present St. Mark's. This was finished in 1799, though the steeple was not completed until 1826. Stuyvesant's ashes are still under the church; while under the flat slabs on the green without are a number of colonial governors and other notables of revolutionary New York.

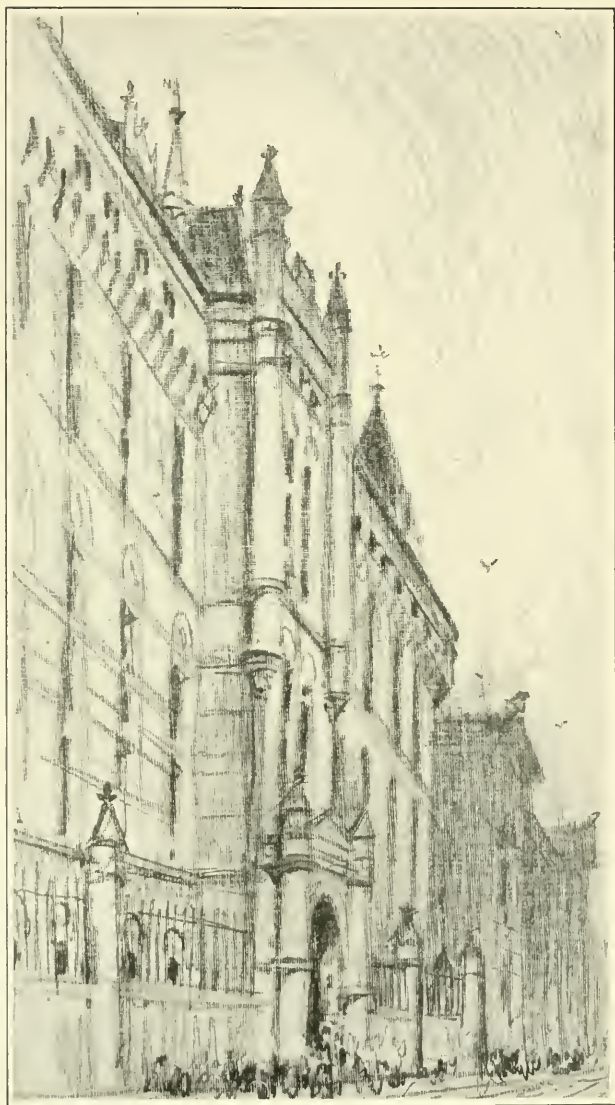
Further up Second Avenue one comes to Stuyvesant Square, lying on either side of the street, and still possessing some large trees, some last-century houses, and the substantial Friends' Meeting House, with its suggestion of Philadelphia in the red brick and white-marble trimmings. This is a delightful portion of the old town, but one that, unfortunately, is no longer occupied by old New York families. With a few exceptions they have moved out and left the park to the new East Sider. The reason given is that access to it is now attainable only by passing through disagreeable streets and quarters. In this re-

spect Gramercy Park, lying a few blocks to the northwest, is better off. It still retains many fine houses, and it also keeps an air of tranquillity quite unshaken by the city's roar.

From Gramercy Park the transition to more familiar streets is quickly made. Broadway and Madison Square with the upper avenues are near at hand; and perhaps the pedestrian thanks the Deity under his breath that there are upper avenues. Charity worker or philanthropist though he may imagine himself, he usually has small desire to live in Mott or Bayard Street. The problem of congestion in the tenement district is one that he will help solve with purse or pen or voice, but at a reasonable distance. Settlement work is not to every New Yorker's fancy.

There is another walk up the East Side for those who prefer to see the city without so much admixture of the ghetto or "Little Italy." It is by way of Center Street from the City Hall. This takes one through a district fast building up with sky-scrapers. The new Municipal Building is in course of construction at the right; and there are great structures of a forbidding nature on the left, designed no doubt with their sculpture to be "Renaissance" in style, but are instead only huge conglomerations of stone. Farther on the new Tombs in gray stone, with the suggestion of a mediæval French prison in its roof and towers, is more interesting to the artistic; and the little





PL. 35.—THE NEW TOMBS, CENTER STREET

prisoner's bridge that runs from it across the street to the Criminal Court Building is doubtless more harrowing to the morbid.

Just beyond the Criminal Court Building, on the corner of White and Lafayette streets, stands a striking illustration of our architectural borrowings. It is a miniature French chateau doing service as a fire engine house! The amusing as well as amazing part of it is that it answers its purpose very well, and even looks quite charming planted there on the curb under the shadow of the heavy Court Building. English, in suggestion at least, is the new Police Headquarters at Grand Street. It suffers somewhat, as any such domed building must, by being too much shut in by other buildings. There is little opportunity to see it in its entirety, to study its proportions. It is right enough as architecture, but does not belong on the watermelon slice of ground allotted to it.

Moving as straight up town as the now divergent street will allow brings one once more in contact with tenement quarters and congested populations. They soon disappear, however, as one passes across Bleecker Street into the region of Great Jones Street and Lafayette Place. Here the walker may, if so disposed, pass straight across the city to what was once Greenwich Village by practically the same route that New Yorkers traveled a hundred years ago. What is now the Bowery was the main road leading out of lower New York, and at the present Astor

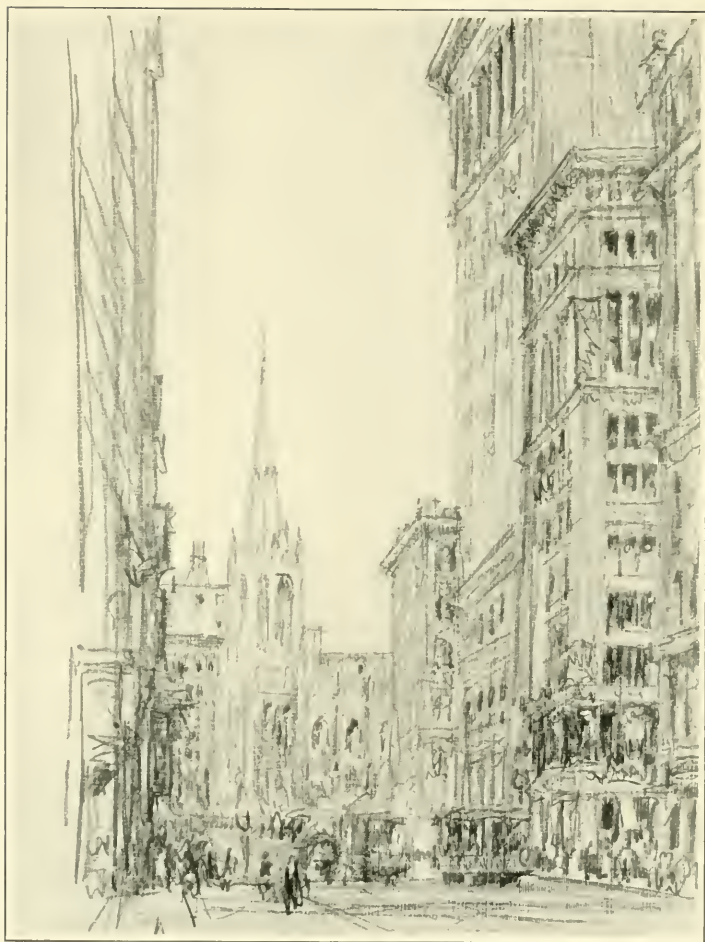
Place there was a branch road leading over to Greenwich. The line of it to-day may be only guessed at, but undoubtedly it led directly past Washington Square — originally a marsh where the Dutch shot ducks, and afterward a pauper burying-ground. When the branch road became a fashionable drive, the smart folk of the day objected to the presence of the burying-ground and it was moved farther away to what is now Bryant Park. Not until 1827 was the land laid out as a park and called Washington Square, and not until some years later was the dignified row of brick and marble residences on the north side built. From the square onward the route was probably by Waverly Place, and from thence into the Monument Lane of history but no longer of fact. To-day one goes up Waverly or down Christopher Street, and either thoroughfare soon lands him in the middle of what was once Greenwich Village.

Greenwich is one of the very oldest places on the island of Manhattan. At first it was an Indian village, called Sapokanican, and was probably near the present site of Gansevoort Market. The Dutch governor, Wouter Van Twiller, coveted it, and finally secured it as a tobacco farm. The farmhouse he built upon it, as Mr. Janvier tells us,<sup>1</sup> was the first building erected outside of the Fort Amsterdam region, and practically the beginning of Greenwich. The village had an uneventful history under the

<sup>1</sup> Janvier, *In Old New York*, p. 85.







PL. 36. — GRACE CHURCH, BROADWAY



Dutch, and when it passed to the English it had a suburban character for many years. It was a place where the Warrens, the Bayards, and the De Lanceys had country homes. The building up of it was a gradual affair. It was of some proportions when in 1811 the City Plan, whereby New York was cut up into checkerboard "blocks," came into existence. The new plan jostled the rambling nature of Greenwich to the breaking point, and yet left some of its quarter-circle and corkscrew streets sufficiently intact for the people of the middle nineteenth century to build substantial dwellings along them. These streets with their red-brick buildings remain to us and make up perhaps the most picturesque glimpse of old New York that we have. Along them one sees scattered here and there the gable-windowed wooden houses of an earlier period, with a quaint St. Luke's Chapel, or a scrap of a park, or trees and vines and garden walls that now look strange in the great city.

But Greenwich Village is one of the fast-disappearing features of the town. And here again the contrast is presented. Above the gambrel roofs of the past are lifting enormous sky-scraping factories and warehouses, the traffic from the ocean-liners rattles through the streets, the Ninth Avenue Elevated roars overhead. St. Luke's Park (or, as it is now called, Hudson Park) has been remodeled into a sunken water-garden with handsome Italian-looking loggias that make one gasp when seen

against the old brick residences on either side of it. Abingdon Square (named for the Earl of Abingdon, who married one of the Warrens, and thus came into possession of many acres in Greenwich) has only its name left to suggest a connection with history. Everywhere the new is crowding out the old; and before long Greenwich, where many an old-time New York family made the money that carried it up to a brown-stone front on Fifth Avenue, will be merely a tradition.

It is a comparatively clean portion of the town, this Greenwich district, though now a foreign population is crowding in upon it to its detriment. A walk there is entertaining and, in some of the streets, quite astonishing, not alone for what one sees, but for what one does not hear. In spots there is an unwonted silence, as though one were in some country village. Up Washington Street and up Tenth Avenue there are scraps of this silence to be found about old houses, old walls, old trees. At Twentieth Street the extensive grounds of the General Theological Seminary (formerly called Chelsea Square), with their commanding buildings, seem to emphasize the stillness; but at the much traveled Twenty-Third Street it is lost in the roar of trucks and trolleys.

Unfortunately, perhaps, the average man who walks up town in the afternoon takes none of these strolls — neither to the east nor to the west. He bolts up Broadway with the mob, pushing his way along the sidewalks,

dodging trucks from the side streets, breathing dust and smoke from all streets, and apparently seeing nothing, not even his fellow-pedestrians. With some fine scheme in his head (a pot of money its ultimate outcome), he looks at passing buildings, lights, and colors, but receives no impression from them. He is out for bodily exercise and thinks he is getting it, but knows no reason why he should not work his head in another direction at the same time. The charm of Grace Church is lost upon him; and Union Square appears to him only as a place where there are some trees, park benches, and dirty-looking people seated on the benches reading yellow-looking newspapers. At Madison Square perhaps he begins to take notice; but not of Saint Gaudens' "Farragut," nor the trees, nor the revel of color all about. He squints an eye at the present condition of the newest ascending sky-scraper; he takes a look at a new turn-out or automobile, or looks over the crowd for chance acquaintances, for he is in the shopping district and there are many smartly dressed men and women in the throng. In short, up town has been reached, and life once more begins for him.

He takes no violent interest in the past — this average Broadway walker. Apparently all that he knows of happiness lies in that word, To-day. Yesterday has so completely vanished, has been so thoroughly swept-up and carted away, that the record seems like a blank to him. Was it Philip Hone who declared many years ago that New

York was being rebuilt every ten years? At any rate the statement had some truth in it in his day, and is perhaps even truer now. The past is quickly obliterated by the present. New York is nothing, if not modern. And its average citizen prides himself upon being up to the day, if not ahead of it.

FIFTH AVENUE AT FOUR





PL. X.—FIFTH AVENUE THROUGH THE WASHINGTON ARCH

PL. X.—FIFTH AVENUE THROUGH THE WASHINGTON ARCH







## CHAPTER X

### FIFTH AVENUE AT FOUR

THE throng of people, derived from many sources, that comes up Broadway in the afternoon, begins to disintegrate at Twenty-Third Street. The greater part of it is shunted over diagonally upon Fifth Avenue — apparently pushed over by the stout policeman who stands in the center of the street and holds out a commanding left hand at the cabs and a compelling right hand at the crossing crowd. There it joins with the throng coming up Fifth Avenue, and the united force, with some interlocking and side-stepping, moves on past the new Fifth Avenue Building, and then divides. Half of it goes on into the theater region of Broadway, and the other half crosses and continues up the avenue. It is toward Fifth Avenue that those who walk up town usually turn. The reason is obvious enough. It is the most interesting of all the New York streets, especially in the afternoon, when people are out driving, or are moving rapidly along the sidewalks for exercise or shopping.

It is a wonderful crowd that pours along Fifth Avenue in the late afternoon — wonderful in the sense that you

really do wonder who they are and where they all come from. It is different from the lower Broadway crowd in that more than half of it is made up of women and children, and even the male portion of it shows a different type from those who buy and sell on the exchanges. Many of the people here are in business, too; but it is a retail affair, and has to do with shops and shopping. With these up-town business men are mingled many customers from without, or retired gentlemen from the clubs or residence districts, or people with more time than money who wander about the streets for amusement. As for the women, they are more difficult to place and pigeon-hole. Some represent society and fashion from the drawing-rooms, some represent maids from the nursery and the back stairs, many are from out of town, many are just out of school, not a few belong to the neighboring shops. Aside from the men and women who are more or less native to New York, aside from people of business or leisure, there is always a great host of strangers on parade. From Maine to California, from China to Peru, from Teheran to London, they gather, gather, gather, on Fifth Avenue. It is truly a wonderful throng. It is more cosmopolitan, more stirred and intermixed, than any seen in Paris or Cairo or Hong-Kong — a gathering international in blood, if not in name.

That statement would seem to arrogate much importance, much world-interest attaching to New York;



PL. 37.—FIFTH AVENUE AT THIRTY-FOURTH STREET



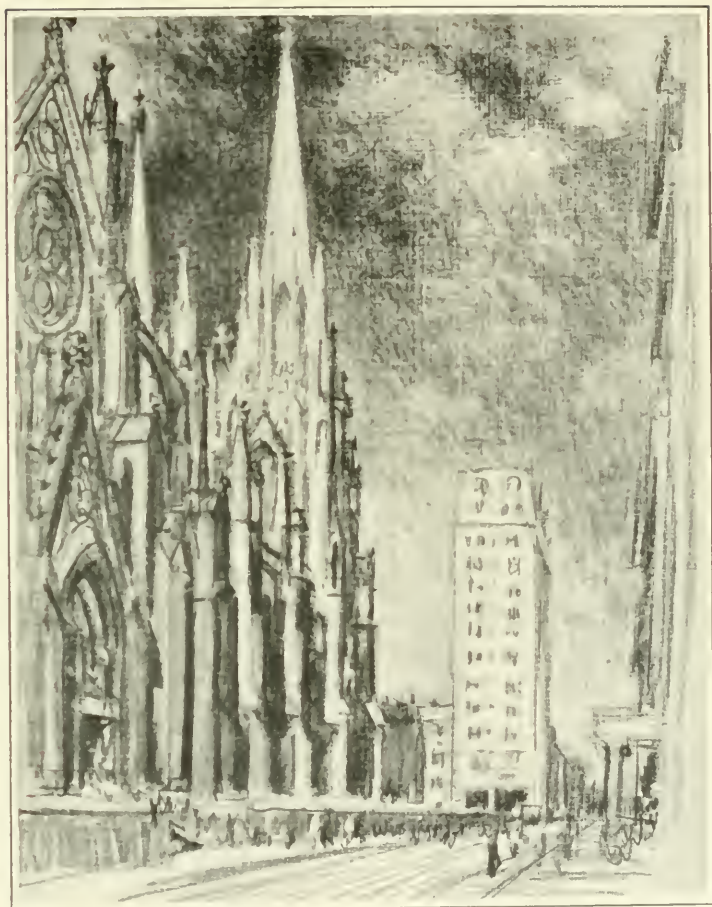
but, on the contrary, it is merely meant to suggest the very apparent blend of races. In London or Berlin or Rome one meets on the promenades a passing people that is positively English, German, or Italian, so far as the type is concerned. But not so in New York. The American type is there to those who have been long enough in the country to see it; but it does not predominate. And there are many varieties of it, many blends of it, looking so much like the original that they are confusing. Four schoolgirls coming down the street may all walk and talk and giggle alike, and have dresses that are made by the same dressmaker; they may even look alike in general resemblance one to another, but the dark eyes of one may hark back to an Italian grandfather, the light hair of another to a Germanic origin, the tall figure of the third to English ancestry. If the fourth girl happens to be an American unto the ninth generation, she will, even then, hardly be more than a variety peculiar to a section of the country. The Boston, the New York, and the Baltimore girls have distinct individualities of their own; and the great west in the last fifty years has developed still another personality vaguely called "the western girl." A composite photograph of them all would no doubt reveal something looking like the average graduate of Wellesley or Smith College; and yet that in itself would prove nothing, would fail to fix the American type or make it recognizable.

The type is, indeed, elusive; which is to say that it

is not one formula that we see in the moving throng but a thousand, not one distinct face but faces reminiscent of the whole white race. The giggling schoolgirls may remind you only of schoolgirls, but the dark-haired, dark-eyed young woman with the sharp profile behind them makes you think of Bucharest and Rumanian types, or possibly Moscow and Russian Jewesses. The dandified young man with her who carries a club-cane for arm exercise, and wears spats on his shoes, and has a very high shirt-collar, looks as though he might be a Dane or a Swede. Yet you are not greatly surprised to find them both talking English in a way that shows them born in America. A group of students from Columbia University has the same variety. It is not that a Brazilian, a Japanese, a Russian, or an Italian mingles with the group, — that is a common enough sight here or elsewhere, — but somehow a tang of Brazil, Russia, or Japan seems in the blood and in the faces of our so-called native-born Americans. The result is a masque difficult to penetrate, a riddle hard to answer; and yet a mystery that has its interest.

Is it true then that the American people is so intermarried and interbred that the parent stock is no longer to be found? Not exactly. New York is New York, and, racially, it does not stand for the whole United States. On the street — on Fifth Avenue in the afternoon — the crowd does not even represent the New Yorkers.





PL. 38. — ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL FROM MADISON AVENUE



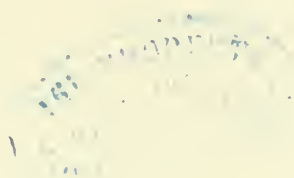
Ask yourself, if you will, how many in all that hurrying mixture of folk, charging in corporals' guards up and down the sidewalks, were born here in the city. You know that not one in ten can claim such birth. Nearly a quarter of the whole present population is Jewish, which gives a hint as to what the total foreign population may be. As for the Americans within the city, think of the thousands who have struck it rich or poor in Michigan or Texas or Montana, and have come to New York to spend or win money; of the hundreds of thousands from all over America who have drifted here for one reason or another. The throng is in New York, of New York, and it practically makes New York, without being native-born, or typical of the city proper, or of the country at large.

What then does this mob in the street really stand for? Nothing that can be told in a sentence. It is a flux, an uneven mingling of many elements, a quantity with value, purpose, and destiny as yet quite undetermined. Our foreign friends who come to us from time to time and go home to write us up in the magazines, have neither difficulty nor hesitancy in telling us just what it means, and assuring us that we are all going to glory or the other way, as the case may be; but the New Yorker who has had the phenomenon under observation all his life is frank to confess that he does not know what will come out of it. The careless stranger in Gotham who strolls

along the streets is perhaps more rational than either of them, and, in consequence, is more happy. He does not bother with the problem at all. He is content to see humanity, male and female after its kind, file by, and to be interested in it largely as a curiosity. That is the easier, if not the more intelligent, way.

Costume is often a badge of nationality where the face is a mystery, yet it is not frequently in evidence. Occasionally a Turk, or a Persian, or a high-class Chinaman moves along Fifth Avenue in native dress, with native dignity; but the great throng is usually inconspicuous in that respect — dressing decently, sometimes extravagantly, and almost always picturesquely, but in the prevailing American or European style. The men cling to blacks and grays and browns, whereas the women often appear in brilliant colors, especially in the spring of the year, at the Easter season. That most of those seen in lively colors belong to the shop-girl and domestic circles does not detract in the least from the color effect of the avenue. Those who count themselves in society and leaders of fashion sometimes dress just as extravagantly, but they do not show themselves on the sidewalk on Easter Sunday.

The mixture of nationalities, if responsible for the types that one meets on the avenue, is also, in a secondary sense, responsible for the varied coloring. Certainly there is great variety, and the stroller who is out for color, local or otherwise, finds enough to bewilder





PL. 39.—UPPER FIFTH AVENUE

him. Group succeeds group hurrying by, and no two of them quite alike in any respect. Girls, troops of girls, in grays, in browns, in blues, greens, pinks, and mauves, quite unconscious of everything but their own talk; old women in silks and bombazines, with querying glances up, around, and about; butlers and haberdashery clerks and men-milliners somewhat puffed up with their own importance, trying to assume the blazing ties and swagger airs of their masters or patrons; old clubmen with white waistcoats and top hats; fat people with apoplectic faces; shopkeepers and agents and salesmen in stripes and checks; churchmen in clerical garb; nuns in black; emigrants in caps, staring round them with a wild surmise,—all move and intermingle in the currents. And with them, pushing against them, running into them, are children and maids and baby carriages in fluffy colors, messenger boys, telegraph boys, newsboys, bundle carriers, smart youths with Boston terriers, peddlers with arms full of puppies, and sometimes schoolboys on roller skates to add to the confusion and the consternation.

With all its “tackle trim and sailing free,” in exalted spirits and by no means to be snubbed or subjected to indignities, it is, nevertheless, a good-natured throng like its down-town prototype. It seldom complains. Cabs and automobiles threaten its heels or toes as they cut through into the side streets, but the crowd merely dodges and swerves; brusque young men, walking rapidly, push



ahead and flourish sticks or umbrellas close to following faces, but there is no protest; platforms are mounted and descended over new construction work, and the whole moving mass may be shunted into the street and around an excavation or a mass of heavy stone or iron being hoisted aloft, but nothing is said. Not even the snow and mud and water on the cross-walks in winter bring forth more than a mild protest. For a people easily excited, and sometimes given to violent punishments for minor offenses, it certainly keeps its temper well.

The street from gutter to gutter is just as full of vehicles as the sidewalks are of moving people. And the same variety rules, the same wonderment is excited in the one as in the other. Carriages of all sorts crowd along in processional line. Victorias, landaus, broughams, road wagons, occasionally an old-fashioned "buggy," mingle with motor-buses, cruising cabs, countless makes and colors of automobiles, delivery wagons, express wagons, furniture vans, short-haul trucks, motor-cycles, ordinary bicycles. Policemen, mounted or standing, are in the center of crowded cross-streets to hold up the line of carriages for a moment and allow a stream of foot-passengers to pass over; but as a rule everyone does his own scrambling, keeps from under the horses' feet, and gets about or across as best he can. The cabs pay little attention to foot-passengers, and the automobiles pay still less. They all move as fast as the police will allow, and



sometimes a little faster. The mounted police occasionally stop motor-cars in other places, but not frequently on Fifth Avenue. The congestion of travel there in the afternoon does not admit of speeding; and besides, a certain amount of hurry is recognized as a necessary evil.

It is usually a more well-to-do class of people seated in the carriages and cabs than walks upon the sidewalk, and perhaps it represents fashion or society better, since neither of them cares much for going about on foot in New York. But it is not more American than the class on the sidewalk, and it may not be any better bred or better born. It is gay-looking, however, and makes quite an impression. Automobiles, driven perhaps by stout, red-faced men with handsome, overdressed, rather flashy young women on the back seat; victorias with elderly people in black; broughams with single occupants, and the men on the box dressed up to the color of their horses' coats; hansoms and auto-cabs with young people leaning on the closed doors; omnibuses with top-loads of passengers; huge cars with a crowd of out-of-towners stretching their necks, "seeing New York," and having misinformation shouted at them through megaphones at the same time; four-in-hands with blowing horns and guests on the seats that try to look indifferent, as though long accustomed to coaching; vehicles, big and little, conspicuous and inconspicuous, very smart and very shabby, all sweep along in line, up or down the

avenue, the occupants bowing to acquaintances, talking to one another, giving orders to the footman, stopping to run into shops, full of energy, full of life, apparently happy, as though living were a joy. Occasionally the carriages huddle up along the curbs and stand still to let a fire engine or a hospital ambulance rush by, which intimates to them that there is some unhappiness in the world; but the faces are sober for only a moment. People on Fifth Avenue are more or less on parade, and whatever their griefs or sorrows this is not the place to give them voice or look.

It seems an unending, interminable crowd that moves by foot and horse and automobile along the avenue in the afternoon. The men go down town in the morning and the women are left at home to their own devices. They manage to worry through the early hours in domestic or social duties, but by the afternoon they must get out, must have air. Many of them seek it on the avenue *en route* to the Central Park, perhaps stopping to shop or call on the way. They are met on the avenue by the busy and the idle of the other sex, and added to by children and nurses, by simple young folk of fashion, by clerks and messengers and touts, by shopmen and agents and travelers and foreigners. Hence the great crowd and its infinite varieties.

Hence also some of the great noise that wells up from the street and reverberates along the walls of the high

buildings. There is no limit placed upon individual license in this respect, and the havoc that is wrought among people with highly strung nerves is not to be calculated. It seems something of an American habit to make as much noise as possible. Engines, tugs, steamboats, motor-cars, trolleys, bicycles, ambulances, all carry gongs or whistles and ring or blow them like mad on the slightest provocation. There never was an evil crying so loudly for reform as this. One has small patience with it because so much of it is unnecessary.

And the automobile atmosphere! — the smoke arising from the laziness or carelessness of chauffeurs, and the dust from the constant friction of travel! Much of this is again unnecessary, and warrants a certain amount of bad temper on the part of those living along the avenue. If there is one person more than another in this year of grace who needs to feel the strong arm of the law, it is the careless and speed-mad automobile driver. The smoke that afflicts Fifth Avenue is of his manufacture, and there is no need for it. The cities of Europe do not have it; they would not allow it. So, too, the matter of dust might be remedied by proper street-sprinkling, though there is difficulty in this, because the water freezes on the asphalt in winter and makes traffic dangerous. Still, the patience of the long-suffering people keeps such abuses alive. It tolerates intolerance and apparently acquiesces in lawless liberty.

The background that this noise reverberates from, that this dust and smoke keep hiding and revealing, that these people and carriages and horses and flunkies and foot-passengers are cast upon, is novel enough, perhaps unique in the world's history. Fifth Avenue is said, with some ostentation, to represent more wealth than any other street in the world. The statement is trite, and has small value for us. It formerly meant that those who owned the residences around Murray Hill were the richest people in the world; but many of those residences have been abandoned, the people have gone farther up town, and Fifth Avenue, below Fifty-Ninth Street, is fast turning into a street of shops. It is the background of shops, hotels, and residences, mingling and running together, that really seems unique.

The cause of the mixture is not far to seek. The shops follow the hotels and, to some extent, subsist upon them. Wherever the hotel guests are quartered there are the eagles gathered together. Naturally there is a lively demand for rentable buildings about Thirtieth and Thirty-Fourth streets. Every hall bedroom or crack in the wall in that locality is a valuable asset and rents as an office or at least a showcase. Trade also follows the fashionable residence district. Ten years ago this district lay on the west side of the city, but since then it has been shifted to the east side. The better class of shops no longer follow Broadway but Fifth Avenue, overflowing on the

side streets in small concerns that cannot pay the heavy rentals of the avenue itself. What the avenue is destined to become everyone knows since the Altman store was erected between Thirty-Fourth and Thirty-Fifth streets. The Tiffany and Gorham buildings, and the sky-scrappers that are going up in their neighborhood, merely carry out the Altman idea that Fifth Avenue below the park is no longer a street of residences, but a place where a vast retail trade is carried on.

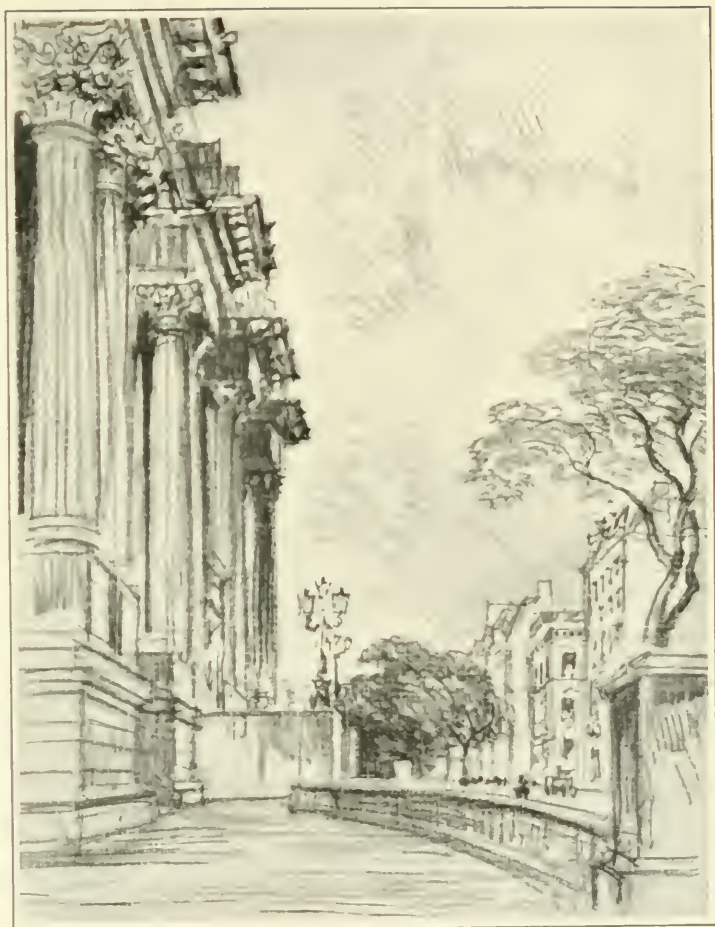
The flow of business keeps pushing up the avenue, meeting with a check in the Public Library at Fortieth Street, but stopping for only a moment. It is felt again, almost immediately, at Forty-Second Street and beyond. Once more, at Fiftieth Street, there is an interruption. The imposing Cathedral of St. Patrick seems to call a halt, while beyond it the Union Club, and opposite it the row of Vanderbilt houses with the University Club, make quite a barrier. It is said that the property-owners thereabouts will not sell for store purposes and that they will protect that spot of the avenue as a residence quarter. The tale has been told before, and answers perhaps for the present generation of land-owners; but what those who inherit will do no man can say. In the past they have generally preferred fresh fields and pastures new, and allowed the old places, beset by a circle of tall buildings, to be torn down and rebuilt for trade. As for the Cathedral-Vanderbilt reservation, a business incentive

bubbles up just beyond it in two lofty fashionable hotels, and sooner or later large department stores will come up to meet them. Then the reservation will be between the jaws of the hills — the sky-scrappers above and below it — and residence there will be no longer desirable.

The Plaza at Fifty-Eighth Street is another gathering place for high hotels that nod and beckon at the shops to come on. It is an imposing square, opening as it does upon the Central Park, and illuminated as it is by that superb statue of Sherman by Saint Gaudens. In itself it is perhaps a better suggestion of how the new city will look when completed than almost any other portion of New York. The tall buildings hold together as a group and are, in measure, harmonious as to scale. To be sure, they make the square look small and the trees of the Central Park are dwarfed by them; but that could hardly be avoided. The squares and streets of the city could not be widened to meet the scale of the sky-scrappers. They will look smaller and narrower, losing somewhat in grandeur, as the buildings continue to ascend. The only compensation that one can squeeze out of it is that the streets will become more picturesque, just as the narrow passageways of Cairo are now more picturesque than the boulevards of Paris.

Beyond the Plaza the avenue runs on, the Central Park on one side of it and a long row of ornate residences on the other. It is not likely that business will break into





PL. 40. — FIFTH AVENUE FROM METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
LIBRARY  
1100 EAST 58TH STREET  
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637



this row for many years to come, if at all. It is more valuable as a residence than as a business quarter, fronting as it does upon the park. As such it is closely held by people of wealth, who have erected residences that, too often, proclaim wealth without as well as within. Some of the houses there are ostentatious, to say the least. There is apparent in them a striving for the magnificent which frequently results in the ridiculous. The architectural pretense of one thing when it is clearly apparent that it is another thing; the wrong use of columns, keystones, arches, windows; the over-ornamentation of fine stone that would look so much better unadorned, all suggest that the average millionaire and his wife have difficulty in spending their money sensibly, and that their architect is something of a goose in the bargain.

The excuse for the architect is that he is interfered with and not allowed to carry out his plans; but aside from that he too often fails to rise to the occasion. Never, since the days of the Renaissance, has he had such a chance, with such new problems to solve, and such unlimited means to solve them with, as just now in New York. In sky-scraper, storehouse, armory, hotel, apartment-house, dwelling-house, there have been a thousand opportunities for the genius to proclaim himself. Many times the work has been done in a new and original way; but many times, too, it has been a copy of an older building, or a conservative variation of a known success. Over-decoration,

rather than want of proportion, has usually been its crying fault. The householder has only a façade, say, thirty feet in width, with which to establish the identity of his house from that of his neighbor. He must use something individual and original on the outside, and that something is almost always ornamentation — chasing or carving in stringcourse or window-frame or doorpost. But it is seldom just, or true, or quite right; it is often overdone, or trivial, or out of scale.

Yet with all that is bad or indifferent, with all that is abortive or absurd in Fifth Avenue houses, there is still a leaven of good, and much that may be justly regarded with pride as the promise of better things. The striving for results is not a thing to groan over in despair. It at least shows an attempt at originality, a discontent with present attainment, if you will, which is always the preliminary step to new creation. Out of much travail, perhaps, shall come a newer architecture — a nobler art.

## SHOPS AND SHOPPING

.





PL. XI.--BROADWAY FROM MADISON SQUARE









## CHAPTER XI

### SHOPS AND SHOPPING

THE wonderment at the enormous sums of money made down town in New York is paralleled by a still greater wonderment over the ease with which those sums are disbursed up town. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but their domestic partners know how to distribute the increase. Not all of it. There is much said and written about people in the city "living beyond their means," and many there are who do, no doubt; but the majority is much too shrewd and far-seeing for that. It spends, and spends recklessly; but not everything is flung into the yearly budget. There is usually the wherewithal for more than one rainy day.

The shopping habit in New York is said to be distinctly feminine. The majority of men hate the selection and buying of articles and usually put it off on their wives or sisters or other female relatives, even to the buying of such personal effects as ties, gloves, shirts, jewelry, and frequently suits of clothing. And the women usually take very kindly to the task. Many of the mid-wealthy class, so to speak, have few domestic duties or troubles;

they live in apartments and, to avoid the servant problem, they usually get their breakfasts and luncheons in the restaurant downstairs, and their dinners at the larger places outside. Between meals, time is often plentiful, superabundant, even wearisome to the women flat-dwellers. They do not go down town, and they cannot stay in-doors forever; so, usually, they go out, "just to do a few errands." This means shopping. There is nothing else for many a poor woman to do.

The tradition obtains in New York that the women shoppers are given to much newspaper reading, with a noting of "special sales" of dry-goods and the like; that they dearly love a bargain counter and go in with a rush to buy unavailable and superfluous articles just because they are cheap; that they are easily lured by nickel-catching devices and are made giddy by a window dressing or a perfervid showcase. Possibly this is masculine ridicule flung out to check the expense account. The casual observer does not pretend to delve into so intricate a problem. He knows merely that there is always a plenty of shoppers in the street, that they are nine out of ten of them wearing petticoats, and that the congestion of petticoats is greatest in the region where special sales and bargain counters are advertised. The conjunction of the crowd with the counter may be accident, but it looks predetermined.

And what a crowd! The residents of the up-town apartment-houses are only a part of it. Rich and fashionable

people like to shop, too; and besides, there is a great procession that comes in from the suburbs every morning by ferry, tunnel, and railroad, and makes a straight line, not for Wall Street, but for the shopping district. The many forces usually gather and thicken along upper Sixth Avenue or Broadway between Madison Square and Thirty-Fourth Street, or on Twenty-Third Street, and by noon they fairly seethe. Many are so interested in the game of purchasing that they will not leave a shop for luncheon. They take an elevator and go to the top of the building where, in all the large department stores, there is a thirty-seven or a forty-nine cent luncheon, or its equivalent, to be had, served with expedition and sometimes with courtesy. After luncheon the shopping is continued, or a *matinée* at the theater is introduced as a side diversion. By five o'clock the out-of-towners, somewhat worn from wrestling with the pave, the mob, and possibly the luncheon, are on the way home; the up-towners are squeezing into surface or elevated cars; and the day's work is done.

There is a difference in the shopping crowds, dependent upon the places where they are seen. Occasionally along Broadway or Twenty-Third Street one sees a mingling of all the clans, all the circles, all the shopping world; but usually certain classes go to certain sections and not elsewhere. Time was, and not so long ago at that, when the fashionable gathering place was Tenth Street and Broadway, with an overflow into Fourteenth Street as far west

as Sixth Avenue; but the smart shops have followed the residences, and the people that once went there do so no more. Yet there are shops and shoppers still in Fourteenth Street. It is now the stamping ground, not of the poorest, but of the poorer classes; and in its window fronts are displayed dress-goods, haberdashery, head-gear, furniture, wall-papers, that seem expensive at any price. No doubt the shopkeepers there take great credit to themselves for discerning what the poor and ignorant want, and giving it to them; but it is rather hard upon the poor.

Fourteenth Street is always crowded with shoppers, and as they move by one seems to recognize factory girls, domestics, policemen's wives, janitors' daughters, mingling with suburban shoppers, and people of more means from up town. The older people are often dressed shabbily and look dingy in the face and hair; the younger ones are garbed flashily and cheaply, their clothing as pinch-beck as their jewelry. They look well-fed, laugh much, and are not objects of pity, save that they are misguided, and spend their money without substantial return. It is a somewhat awkward, heavy-moving crowd. It has the pace of those who are much upon their feet and moves in a tired way. The quickness of the Twenty-Third Street people — people who look as though they never did any work and were in continual need of exercise — is absent.

The sidewalks on lower Sixth Avenue have similar-



PL. II. — BROADWAY NEAR TENTH STREET

THE  
LIBRARY  
OF THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY  
AT  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

looking groups and processions. They keep threading in and out of small shops and cheap stores, hoping in each new place to get what they want for less money than has just been asked them. In the end perhaps they have worn out more in shoe leather than they have saved on gloves or hat.

As you move up Sixth Avenue the shoppers begin to look more prosperous, more alert, and more sure of what they want. They are largely suburbanites; and the woman who has come down from Tarrytown, or in from Plainfield, has the campaign of the day all planned beforehand, and the courage to drive it through to a finish. She and her cohorts have little fear of cabs and cars and policemen. They charge across the street in phalanxes, choke up the sidewalks, squeeze through revolving doors, pack the elevators, besiege the counters, fill up the restaurants. All kinds and conditions of women are here — some stout, some thin, some lively, some severe, some handsome, some commonplace. All the colors of the rainbow flutter and stream from them at times. Many of them wear grays or dull browns or greens, but occasionally some bird of paradise floats by to lend a flash of high color to the scene. Up and down and across the streets the long lines come and go. Occasionally they get caught at the foot of an elevated station and whirl about in an eddy, or get choked in the door of a department store; but they unwind and quickly move on again



— a perspiring, excited, somewhat violent throng that frequently forgets its manners and its dignity in remembering its immediate mission.

The shoppers on Twenty-Third Street are merely a right-angle pipe connection of the band on Sixth Avenue; and yet as soon as one mingles with the people on this cross street he recognizes quite a different element. That everyone hurries in New York is a commonplace, but this newer element seems to make haste with more ease and carriage. It is still a very miscellaneous throng, having its sharp contrasts of wealth and poverty, charm and repulsiveness, happiness and misery; and its constituent members in their actions are not unlike the shoppers on Sixth Avenue. They hang in clusters before the show-windows, gather like aggregations of ants about some new-found wonder, then disintegrate, move on, drop in some notion store, gather once more about a counter, separate and move on again. It is, however, an orderly, self-contained crowd, wears good clothes, does not care to have them soiled or torn in a crush, and has the idea that there is something "common" about bargain-counter scrambles. Possibly it has more money in its purse than the crowd on Sixth Avenue, and that makes all the difference in the world in one's point of view. Besides, it is closely connected with Fifth Avenue — the pipe line extending through from both avenues, and being supplied from both ends.



Fifth Avenue, of course, furnishes shops and shoppers of the more fashionable kind. The stores, with a few exceptions, are not large department affairs, but they are large enough to cause surprise when it is considered that each place handles perhaps only one kind of goods. The great jewelry stores, the silverware establishments, the china and glass concerns, are examples to the point. It is what is called a "better kind of retail trade" that is met with here. It is the place where rare rugs, furniture, tapestries, pictures, bric-a-brac, books, laces, silks, hats, flowers, are bought; where fashionable tailoring and millinery are carried on; but where the smaller and cheaper articles such as cottons, ginghams, notions, ribbons, are usually not in stock. Nothing cheap is sold on Fifth Avenue. There are no bargain counters, no forty-nine-cent ruling prices; and people do not go there without a plethoric purse. Everything costs half as much again as it could be bought for around the corner — a statement that finds constant assertion and denial, and leads up to endless argument from individual experience. The statement usually meets with acquiescence, however, except from those who perhaps seek to justify their own extravagance.

And there are hosts of the extravagant in this shopping district. They usually have accounts at the various places, and have things "charged"; so that the day of reckoning is not the day of sinning. They buy what they want, and

oftentimes much that they do not want and cannot use; but they seem not to be worried by errors of judgment. Things are sent back, or "changed," or more often perhaps packed off to the closets or garrets upstairs. The recklessness and the wastefulness of the shoppers on Fifth Avenue are promoting causes of the high prices that prevail there. The shoppers also have much to do with setting the pace for the flashy, garish populace of the city. The pinch-beck of the Bowery or Harlem is but the imitation of Fifth Avenue glitter.

But what could be expected of the newly arrived daughters and wives (yes, sons) of commerce who have to keep down the paternal income by "doing things socially"! They carry it off with quite an air, they swagger and pretend and make good feints at aristocratic bearing; but ever and anon some infamy of taste crops out to suggest they are still not very sure of their position. It takes several generations to establish gentility in the blood, and even then bad breeding and lack of education will come to the surface in the shape of a hat or the cut of a dress, as in the use of a fork or a phrase. But, all told, the commercial set of New York is not so bad. Considering its opportunities it handles itself with more *aplomb* than the corresponding classes in London, Berlin, or Paris. Doubtless the people of the older business centers were once the same in degree if different in kind. Carpaccio's characters from the Venetian life of the

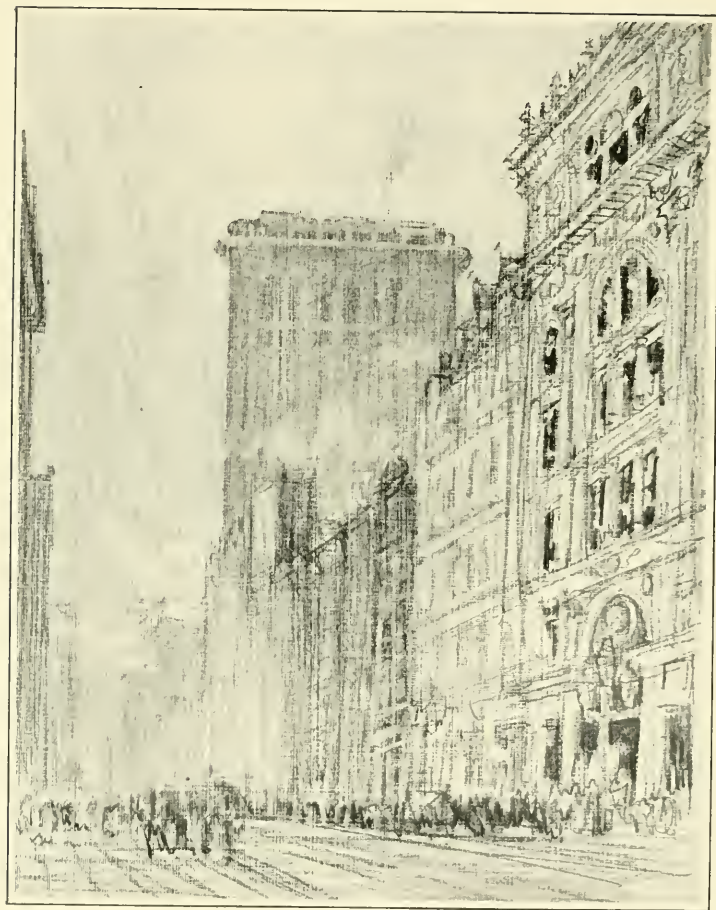
fifteenth century, as Paolo Veronese's of the sixteenth century, look like models of good taste to-day, but in their time they must have been regarded as splendidly barbaric.

In its varied and multifold functions society in New York shows as well perhaps in shopping as in anything else. The very manner in which the women step out of their carriages, give directions to the footmen, and drift across the sidewalk into a shop entrance, has an air of distinction about it. The general impression is that the air is something courtly or princely, but in real life princesses and duchesses are often heavy and awkward in their exits and entrances, somewhat dowdyish in their clothing, and would be mistaken for very common folk by the mob. The American woman has very little in common with them. She is more graceful, more spirited, and far more ornate. She is dressed and sometimes overdressed — especially when she goes shopping. Her garments are of the best and most costly materials. That is the fault with them; they are too good for the street and the shop. They fit her exactly, perfectly, precisely. That again is an objectionable feature. They fit too well and give the impression that they were meant for the stage rather than the street. If we cling to the old idea that garments are somewhat like a picture-frame and should not be noticed, that if conspicuously good or conspicuously bad they are objectionable, then the American woman has decidedly too

much garmenting. But she does not think so; and (to bury precedent for a moment) she certainly carries her clothes as no other woman ever did, carries them as though born to them and for them. And how she walks! What a bearing she has! No wonder that the strangers who come here are forever falling in love with the American girl. She is something of a fetich, to be sure; but there is some excuse for the worship. She is far from being a wooden idol.

All the shop people in New York are proficient in the art of making their windows interesting to the people passing in the street. There are professional men known as "window dressers" who are said to earn unusual sums through their skill in displaying articles to the best advantage in shop windows. Very attractive are some of these windows, not only in their arrangement, but also in the quality of the articles shown. In Europe things of fineness and value are hidden in the secret places of the shop and brought out only by special request, but in America they are often openly displayed. This does not mean jewels and goldsmith's work alone, but rare rugs, rich silks, fine porcelains, Japanese embroideries, works of art. It is not an unusual thing to see a twenty-thousand-dollar picture displayed in the window of a Fifth Avenue gallery, upon a background of valuable tapestry; and the window of a china shop may show Chinese porcelains that are worth many times their weight in gold.





PL. 42. — TWENTY-THIRD STREET



On the inside of a New York store one is astonished by the stock carried. Whatever kind of stock it may be, it is almost always large in quantity and in variety. Floor after floor is filled to overflowing with silks, rugs, fine linens, woolens; with tons upon tons of bronzes, silverware, china; with uncountable boxes of hats, shoes, gloves, fans; with tens of thousands of books, engravings, etchings, photographs. The furniture stores seem capable of supplying beds and chairs and chests of drawers for all creation; there are enough *articles de Paris* in the shops on or about Twenty-Third Street and Fifth Avenue to cover half the drawing-room tables in New York; and in the huge dry-goods stores along Broadway and in the side streets between Union and Madison squares, there are "dress goods" sufficient in quantity to clothe half the women and children in the land. The bulk of goods carried by the New York retail merchants is something enormous.

Of course, such a volume of stock means a vast trade, and argues the existence of a rigid system of doing business. This is perhaps better exemplified in the department stores than elsewhere — stores so large that some of them cover a whole city square or block, and mount skyward in a dozen or fifteen stories. The system of such a store means the command and discipline of several thousand employees. The messengers, clerks, floor-walkers, cash boys, cashiers, make a small army in themselves. Each

one has his duty to perform, reports and is amenable to his superior officer, and takes orders without questioning. The two thousand employees of a Sixth Avenue store are possibly assigned to the selling of twenty thousand different articles. Almost anything can be bought there — a sealskin sack, a set of furniture, an automobile, a spool of cotton, a canary bird, or a litter of guinea pigs. All commerce is its province. It is the distributing agent of anything found, grown, or manufactured, and it seeks to satisfy all human wants (including afternoon tea), without leaving the premises. No wonder that womankind finds it an attractive place. It is a merger of international exposition and social reception, where you not only see the sights, but meet your friends. And occasionally there is an escape from the place without having purchased anything.

The system of cash and change and charge in these stores is expeditious, bewildering to those who do not understand it; and also at times maddening to those who do understand it. The system is unalterable, procrustean, and always manages to stretch you on the rack rather than the management. You have to "do business" in their way, and the fact that you are the party of the second part in the contract — the one that makes the contract possible by paying the consideration — does not have any weight with them. The exasperating feature of it is that the store managers are not unlike railway and hotel men in that they





PL. 43. — ALTMAN'S, FIFTH AVENUE



seem to regard their "system" of rules as equivalent to state statutes. They ignore the inalienable right of the party of the second part to make conflicting rules of his own, if it so please him. However, the systems of the department stores are usually accurate in their workings, and are as fair to all parties, perhaps, as could be expected. It must be remembered that they have to deal with people by the thousands — fifty or a hundred thousand in a single day — and how their different accounts with their consequent "deliveries" and "returns" are kept requires some imagination to grasp.

In addition to all this selling over the counter there is a very important "mail department" in these stores, through which goods are retailed over the whole of the United States, Canada, Alaska, Mexico, South America, and Europe. Catalogues, and sometimes large magazines, with descriptions and price lists, are sent everywhere. From these the country people in Michigan or Missouri make selections and order by numbers. The cash is sent by draft or money order; and the goods are forwarded by mail. Almost every kind of merchandise is sent through the mails — hats, shoes, cooking utensils, piece goods, anything that is not bulky like furniture or breakable like bottled liquors. In the aggregate this trade through the mails is very large. It is impossible to compute the volume of it. The retail trade of New York is something quite beyond figures.

At the Christmas holidays trade increases a hundred fold. The stocks of the stores are swollen to the point where goods seem to be pushing out the windows and doors, the clerical and messenger force is nearly doubled, and the crowd of buyers is trebled and quadrupled. The streets are inundated with people, the stores are flooded, the counters and cases are like islands in a sea. Buyer and seller, cash boy and floor-man, shoplifter and detective, are whirled about like driftwood. To an aboriginal it would look like humanity gone mad, but there is some method in it. Eventually everyone gets what is wanted, gets a seat or a strap in a car, gets home to tell the tale at the dinner table. And once more the good-nature of the crowd prevails above any little misunderstanding of the moment. It is something of a marvel that so many people of so many different minds and wants can still meet, adjust their differences or agreements, and then go their ways in peace.

One asks himself, again, who they all are, what they all mean, or what the part they have in this scheme of things entire. What is the object of this energy displayed, this time given, this money spent? Perhaps it is not always revealed on the surface, but there usually is some object in it other than idle amusement or personal vanity. The knick-knacks that a woman may pick up in a shop, the new rugs or rolls of wall-paper or cheap etchings that she may take home, may be nothing of importance in them-



PL. 44. — TIFFANY'S, FIFTH AVENUE



selves; but, somehow, she instinctively feels that they will make the house look more comfortable or cheerful or refined, and thus add to the pleasure of the family. It is the same with a great many of the hundreds of thousands. They are, unconsciously perhaps, striving to make someone happier, to give an uplift to the home, to make life more worth the living. And in the aggregate of the mass, in the combined aspirations of the throng, what sequence must be forthcoming? Surely a broader outlook, a nobler living; and, ultimately, a higher civilization. No doubt some of the energy employed is wasted, completely dissipated and lost; but much of it redounds to our good, makes for righteousness, and possibly finds us each to-morrow farther than to-day along the pathway of the better life.





NEW YORK BY NIGHT





PL. XII. — CONEY ISLAND ON THE BEACH







## CHAPTER XII

### NEW YORK BY NIGHT

BEFORE it is dark in the city the electric street lamps, hanging from their steel yard-arms, begin to sizzle as though trying to live up to a steady illumination, and their ground-glass globes take on beautiful opalescent tints of pink and lilac. This is the preliminary sputtering suggestive of the coming current. It ceases as the current grows stronger; and, as the dark falls, the lilac globes turn into marked spots of light and become related and associated with other spots of light. From block to block balls of yellow or orange or pure white or blue-violet appear. The city is soon illuminated — parts of it almost ablaze. At its height the brilliancy of Paris, "the city of light," seems just a little dull by comparison.

All over the city the lights are burning. The Brooklyn Bridge seen from Governor's Island is a tracery of filigree work set with silver stars, underneath on the river and around on the Hudson the ferry-boats come and go like huge fireflies, the South Ferry region and the Battery glare with arc lights, the elevated overhead trails a chain of fire, the high office-buildings show ten thousand illumi-

nated windows, the dome of the World Building is a glittering ring in the heavens, the Singer tower is a nocturne in gold and blue.

After nine o'clock many of the down-town lights upon towers and domes are extinguished, the office windows show dark, the few shop fronts burn only night lights for the patrolmen. The electric street lamp, with its blue tinge, flares along the thoroughfares, but the dark shadow accompanies it. People on the street pass infrequently, and the cab is not often seen. The trolley clangs along Broadway and the elevated continues to roar from Church Street, but otherwise the stillness is almost profound. Especially is this true of Wall and Broad streets, where in the daytime thousands are coming and going. What silence under the walls of the great sky-scrapers! And what shadows those twenty-story buildings cast down into the narrow streets! The electric shaft flashes up into them, piercing them here and there, but not annihilating them. Along the cornices and stringcourses and bottle-shaped cupolas they still linger.

Around Old Trinity at the head of the street, with its well-like area, the shadows gather deeper and even more mysteriously. The giant sky-scrapers about it impose their purple silhouettes one upon another until everything looks a little out of focus and uncertain in dimensions. Goblin shapes spread upward on the night veil, or dance like specters on the flat-faced walls, while possibly around the



THE PROPERTY  
OF  
S. H. H.



PL. 45. — SHERMAN STATUE — EVENING

top of the well runs a series of sparkles and glitters struck off by the moonlight falling upon peaks and pinnacles.

Broadway seems lighter than the other streets of the lower city, owing no doubt to the continuous string of trolleys that run there. And the trolleys with their lights seem to lead but one way, and that up town. Perhaps it is the human moths moving in that direction that give one such an impression, but certainly there is the feeling that the grand fireworks are somewhere under the reflecting sky of the upper city. At Union Square there is apparently an increase in the power of the lights (an illusion, no doubt), on Fifth Avenue an increase in their numbers; but the central illumination of all is on upper Broadway, in the theater district. Beyond that to Seventy-Second Street, along Amsterdam and West End avenues and Riverside Drive, around Columbia University and along the Harlem River, even creeping across the bridges at the upper end of the city, the links of light extend.

Of course, much of this lighting is carried out by the city lamps and by trolleys; but the brilliancy of certain streets and spots like Herald Square, or Times Square, or the shop portion of Fifth Avenue, is materially augmented by the quantity of show-windows, and the prevalence everywhere of the electric sign. All the store fronts are now illuminated by electricity or a brilliant quality of gas, and some of the larger places have rows of lights run-

ning along edges and cornices, thus outlining the whole building from foundation to roof. The electric sign now goes along with every place of amusement, and is frequently flashed at night from large commercial houses, hotels, railroad sheds, and steamboat docks. When to this is added the glitter of the ordinary advertisement sign from scores of roof tops and wall-spaces, the total effect becomes quite bewildering.

Generally speaking, the sign is the same nuisance in New York that it is in London or Paris — only more so. It is put up almost everywhere from one end of the city to the other. Every piece of boarding, every bare wall, every decrepit roof top or vacant window, is plastered with signs. Sandwich men trail them along the curbings; wagons parade the streets with them. Advertisements are in your room at the hotel, on your dinner card, on your car tickets, your wrapping paper, your cigar bands. Wherever the public goes, the sign takes up the trail and follows after. It even pursues people out into the country, where it covers the fence boards and crawls with enormous letters over the farmers' barns and stables. If you fly by fast train and look out of the window, lo, the sign is there! Rows and rows of boardings, with grotesque and hideous personifications upon them, parallel the great trunk-lines out of the city for many miles, disfiguring the landscape, ruining many an amiable disposition, and making a farce of any pretense to love of nature, or

love of one's fellow-man, or even common suburban decency.

Perhaps the most degrading thing about all these signs is that three-quarters of them advertise businesses with which no respectable person would be connected, and push forward wares that no one but a charlatan would lend his name to. Patent medicines and beauty lotions lead the list, with questionable statements about the value of canned soups, or pickles, or whiskies, coming in as a good second. There is not one sign in a dozen that tells the truth, or even pretends to do so. It is a blatant puffing of somebody's business at the expense of the public patience. Wherever one turns, he has Smith's hair tonic, or Brown's corsets, or Jones's consumption cure thrust at him, until he wonders if the world was made solely for the rapacious energy of the Smiths, Browns, and Joneses. The low mendacity exercised in tricking the foolish or the unfortunate is not more reprehensible than the brutal disregard of other people's rights in country view, or city street, or public conveyance.

And there is not the saving grace of art to make the evil less repulsive. The whole battalion of New York sign-makers could hardly muster the genius of one Chéret. Occasionally something proves attractive in color or is novel in design; but usually attention is compelled by the strident quality of blue or red, or the exaggerated proportions of the figures or letters. Crudeness mixed with

vulgarity seems to be purposely chosen, as though the object of advertising was to put you in a rage rather than lure you on to further inquiry. And the coarseness of the onset does enrage many nervous and sensitive people. The vociferous injunction in poison greens to "Drink Somebody's Coffee" or "Smoke Everybody's Cigarettes" is an insult in itself. And it might be done with delicacy, with insinuating grace of line, even with a charm of form and color. But there is too much of the get-rich-quick in the average advertiser to pursue modest methods. He seeks to stampede you with a shout, and pick your pocket while he pushes you.

In New York at night some of the cruder advertising disappears, or reappears in a less objectionable form. The electric signs show everywhere and, though one wearies unto death with what they say, the light of them helps on the general illumination and is rather attractive than otherwise. Roof lines are their favorite locations, though doorways, arches, chimneys, vacant wall-spaces, are all utilized. Letterings, patternings, arabesques, figures of birds and beasts and men, are outlined by small electric globes, and the whole thrust upon the night in giant proportions. Sometimes there are changing letters and different readings, or flash lights that keep blinking and going out in darkness like miniature lighthouses, or shifting globes giving different colored lights.

All told, the glitter and glare of these signs make up



a bewildering and (it may be admitted) a brilliant sight. Great throngs of people delight in them, and perhaps the presence of so many people on the streets at night is, in measure, accounted for by the electric display. The avenues and some of the cross-streets are usually filled with people who are moving leisurely along, stopping to look in at shop windows, drawn in at moving-picture shows by the glare of electricity, or grouped about some place where music is heard. All over the better-lighted streets of the upper city one finds these lines of strollers out for a walk, interested in meeting friends, seeking some sort of amusement or diversion. Fourteenth Street, east and west, crowded with foreigners, is not different from Forty-Second Street, east and west, crowded with young Americans. Men and women, old and young, rich and poor, happy and miserable, — again, one cannot help wondering who they are, where they come from, and where they are going; and the mild wonder if there are any but the sick, the aged, and the "queer," who remain at home quietly, spending an old-fashioned evening with books, or music, or friends.

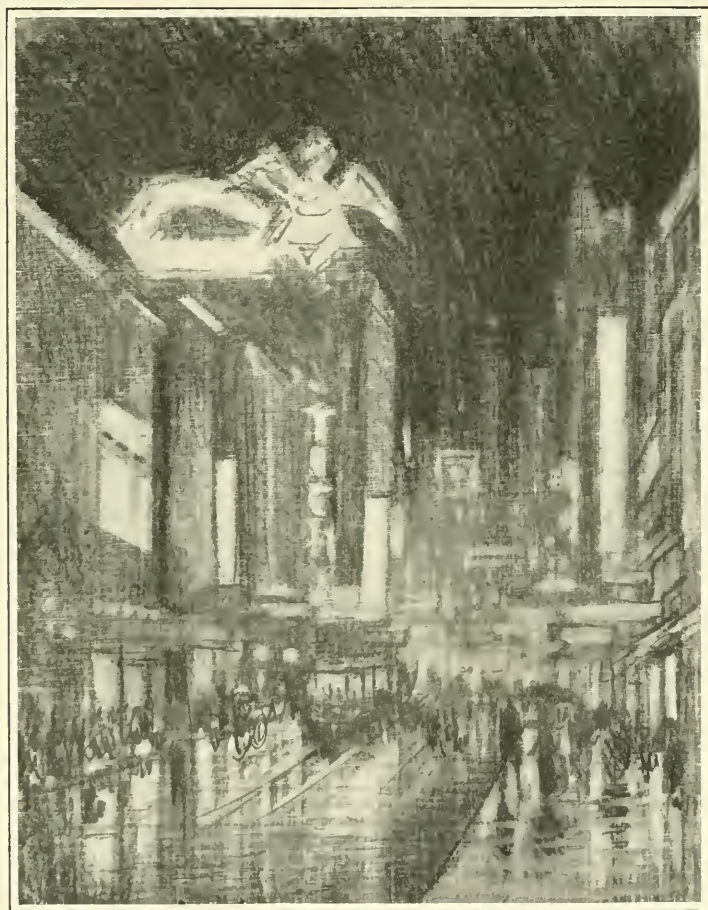
Perhaps the largest gatherings in the evening up town are about the opera-houses, the theaters, the vaudeville and concert halls, the restaurants, the clubs. From Thirty-Fourth Street to Columbus Circle and beyond is just now the amusement center; and there the people, the cabs, and the electric signs are the thickest. At eight in the

evening there is the incessant come and go of trolleys, the rattle and rumble of cabs, the shuffle and push of many feet along the street, the insistent voice of ticket speculators, and the unintelligible shout of men and boys hawking night editions of newspapers. The Gothamite usually pays no attention to this moving roar, in fact he does not see it or hear it; but the stranger is interested in it because perhaps he fancies it stands for the city's gayety. Usually, however, it means only noise, and a disagreeable kind at that. The real interest begins, possibly, at the entrance to the opera and the theater, when the carriages draw up and people step down and out. They make quite an animated throng as they enter the vestibules or crowd the staircases, or the foyer, bowing and chatting to each other, all smiling, all newly garbed, all on pleasure bent. The filling up of a theater with people, the drifting in and the taking of seats, the buzz of conversation, the recognition of acquaintances, the visiting between the acts, are sometimes more amusing to the onlookers than the play itself.

Another interesting sight, especially at the opera, is the row of boxes containing people of more or less prominence socially. When Society shops, it does not anticipate an audience, though it may be very handsomely garbed for all that; when it drives, its fine feathers may be muffled by wraps or shut in by the carriage cover; but when it goes to the opera, it does so in full regalia,



THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
SOUTH



PL. 46. — UPPER BROADWAY — NIGHT

with all its war paint on, to be seen by friend and foe alike. The costumes are of the finest fabric and the most artistic design, the jewels are the rarest and the most brilliant, the coiffure (including the toque or tiara) the most fetching, the fan the most dazzling. Seated in its boxes against a background of gold and red silk, Society looks very imposing, very magnificent. And it seems to be very happy, for it wears a beatific smile and sheds an extra beam of pleasure when its members bend to speak to each other. The slightest contact produces the smile, though people before them have smiled and smiled and smiled and still been villainously unhappy. But if any sorrow is behind the mask, you do not see it. They may grow sad-faced when at home and undressing for the night, but not publicly will they show a rueful countenance.

After the play or the opera is over all the exits are hastily thrown open. People cannot get away fast enough by the main entrances. They may stop a moment to talk to some acquaintance, but usually they lose patience with anyone who holds up the line of people on the stairways or in the vestibule. Just why or what their haste they scarcely know. Most of them are going home and to bed, and are in no hurry about it if they stopped to think; but possibly a third of the audience is going somewhere to supper, and it is this minority that sets the speed for the others until they are quite persuaded that they, too, are in a hurry to secure a table somewhere. Everyone in

New York is not in such hot haste as he appears. Many would, if they could, move slowly, but they understand they must move at the New York pace or else be stepped upon. Thus it is that the average person gets out of a theater faster than he went in; and after he is alone on the sidewalk he perhaps stops to think what he will do or where he will go.

If he is a lone bachelor or with men friends, perhaps he goes off to the Players Club on Gramercy Park, where the actors assemble after the play to talk, smoke, or have supper. If the way lies up Fifth Avenue, perhaps the theatergoer may turn into the artistic Century, the political Union League, the academic University, the social Union, or the grandiose Metropolitan. They are nearly all of them pretentious clubs, nearly all of large proportions, nearly all furnished like modern hotels, — with more extravagance than taste. The columns and gildings, the lounges, curtains, and rugs that set off the smoking, reading, and reception rooms, would be more appropriate perhaps in some palace ball-room. But there is no denying their comfort. They are like the Pullman car, over which we may worry because of its want of simplicity, but not because of the softness of its seats.

The clubs of New York are perhaps the most luxurious known anywhere in the modern world. That is said to be their crying evil. They are too good a substitute for a home; and many men adopt them, have the club address



PL. 47. — PLAZA BY MOONLIGHT

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
LIBRARY

put on their visiting cards, get their mail there, live there. The prominent ones with good dining-room accommodations are well patronized. That portion of the community afflicted with too much time to kill, and perhaps for that reason called the "leisure class," goes to its club every afternoon, and usually ends up there every evening. So-called "club men" keep filing in and out all day long; and not an inconsiderable constituency takes breakfast there in the morning.

Aside from the large clubs the city is well supplied with organizations devoted to work, to study, to music, to art, to the theater. All of them make for society. The small theater club of ten or a dozen members is existent upon almost any city block. Ostensibly it is devoted to a study of the drama. A play is seen, and afterwards the party adjourns to some restaurant or member's house, has its theater supper, and perhaps discusses the performance. These are generally juvenile gatherings, modest enough in scale and possibly shallow enough in criticism, but enjoyable, judging by the faces and the laughter. Young people in New York have the same good time, on slight provocation, that they do elsewhere in the world.

Swelldom, with Boredom on its arm, of course goes to the theater with a loftier air, and afterward drops in at Sherry's or Delmonico's for supper with a more sophisticated and wearied repose of manner. The two great restaurants are never very empty in the evening, and yet



both feel somewhat the influx of people from the opera and the theater between eleven and twelve. Suppers are ordered, people chat vivaciously, the wind instruments of the orchestra rise above the buzz of conversation and the rattle of dishes, waiters flit here and there, guests move from table to table to greet acquaintances, the odor of flowers mingles with the steam of cooking, the flash of diamonds and cut-glass table-ware gets mixed up with silks, portières, marble pilasters, gilded ceilings, pink-and-yellow colorings. Eating and drinking, instead of being the satisfaction of a physical need, is here a social function. The drawing feature is not so much the food as the crowd. That is why the fashionable restaurants are fashionable, — why they are always crowded in spite of high charges.

The two famous restaurants, which somehow always find their way into print as though they fed half the people of New York, are only a small part of the food-supplying establishments of the city. The number of restaurants, cafés, lunch counters — places where food is cooked and served — is something amazing to strangers. Some of the side streets are lined and dotted with eating establishments; all the railway stations, department stores, sky-serapers, apartment-houses, have kitchens attached to them, and the hundreds of hotels often gather more profit from “transients” than from their regular guests. Besides these there are large hall-like places where table d’hôte dinners are served, with music, to miscellaneous





PL. 48. — SHERRY'S (LEFT) AND DELMONICO'S (RIGHT)



parties; cafés, French, German, Hungarian, where what is left of Bohemia likes to assemble and drink foreign wines; oyster and chop houses, where nomads drop in and eat in silence; dairies and confectionery shops, where women go for lunch or afternoon tea. There seems no end to the traffic in cooked things, nor to the places where they are supplied.

The stranger passing from restaurant to restaurant in up-town New York after seven in the evening, would be very apt to conclude that most of the city had given up house-keeping and was taking its meals "out." And he would not be far from the mark in his conclusion. High rents for houses and the constant irritation over servants have driven many thousands to seek sleeping quarters in flats and eating accommodations in hotels and restaurants. The social conditions in New York are not favorable to the development of the domestic household. Even some of the very wealthy people in the city have, of recent years, preferred taking a suite of apartments at a hotel to the opening of their town house for the winter months.

After the theater, and after the supper, when the hours run into the morning and people begin to grow weary even of themselves, they silently slip away, singly and in pairs, by cab and car, scattering to the far ends of the city perhaps, disappearing up brown-stone steps, through the entrances of apartment-houses, or down hotel corridors.

The city roar dies down a little, the lights glitter far up the streets where only belated stragglers are seen, the patrolmen go along their beats, stopping occasionally to pull at a door knob, or pass a word with a late diner. The city sleeps for a few hours, — sleeps “lively” for fear it will be late to business in the morning, sleeps like a weary columbine at the theater wing, in all its paint and spangles, expecting its call to “go on” at any moment.

HOMES AND HOUSES





PL. XIII. APARTMENT HOUSES, UPPER BROADWAY

PL XIII. APARTMENT HOUSE - UPPER BROADWAY







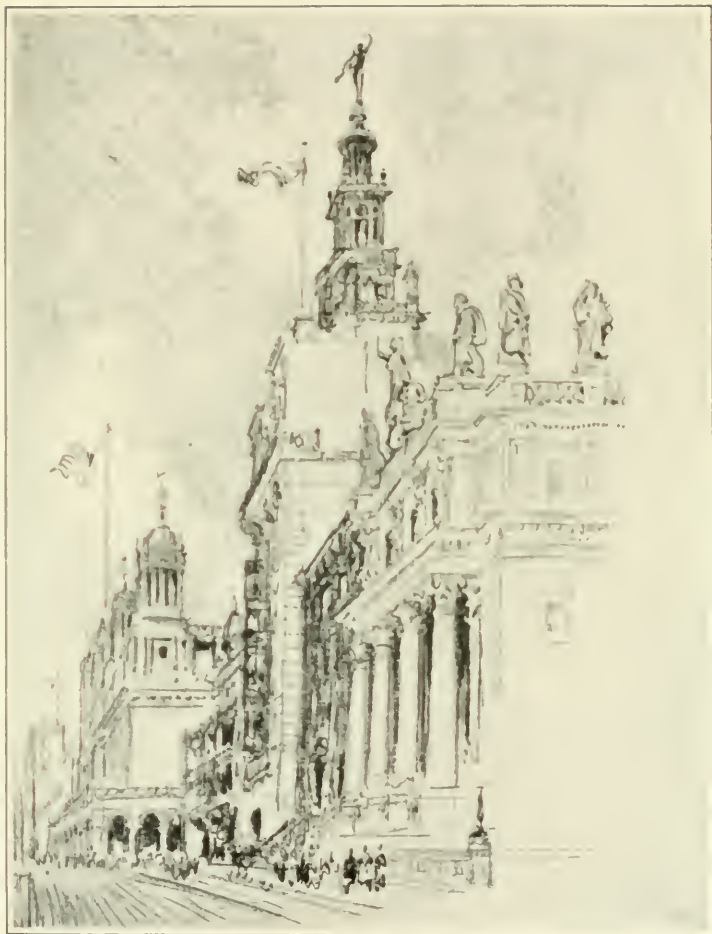
## CHAPTER XIII

### HOMES AND HOUSES

THERE are plenty of stopping-places in New York, plenty of hotels, apartments, rooms *en suite*, boarding-houses, dwelling-houses; but not a great many homes. It takes something more than a quadrangle of brick or marble to make a home. A community of interest, a domestic feeling, even some old-fashioned sentiment, are necessary; and, unfortunately, the average New Yorker feels he cannot indulge in such things freely, — at least, not within the city limits. It is ground in upon him at every turn that the city is a place for business, not sentiment. Wife and children and kindred may be with him, but their being in the city is only a temporary arrangement. The roof overhead is a camping place where they rest for a night, or a month, or a year, but not for an indefinite period. The home is off somewhere in the country — up the river, along the Sound, over in New Jersey — rather than in the city. Even those who have no place in the country move about so often, from one portion of the town to another, that they are nearly as homeless as gypsies. Permanence, the corner-stone of the domestic establishment, is lacking.

People when compelled to live in the cramped quarters of a shop where they carry on a trade, soon adjust themselves to the shop conditions by doing away with all unnecessary impedimenta. Whether permanent or temporary, they must put up with inconveniences, and get along with little friction and less worry. The New Yorker in his big shop feels very much the same way, and his wife heartily agrees with him. When they are able to have that ideal place in the country, they will have their own table, their own rooms, their own porch and doorstep; they will have horses and servants and flower-gardens and open air, with the luxury of green fields and the simple life; but while they occupy a series of little cells in the fifteenth story of a sky-scraper, reached by an express elevator, warmed by steam, and lighted by electricity, what is the use of trying to keep a cow or striving to grow lilac bushes? Bottled milk left on the doorsill, and a rubber-plant that grows up a chimney as readily as elsewhere, are obviously the proper substitutes.

So it is that the citizen of Gotham soon becomes an economist of effort. He cuts away the worries and bothers. He and his wife dodge the servant question at the start by taking an apartment instead of a whole house, and getting their food downstairs in the restaurant instead of preparing it themselves. A maid looks after the sweeping and cleaning of the place, messenger boys and the telephone do the errands, and the janitor fights off agents, gas men,



PL. 49. — BEGINNING OF MADISON AVENUE



and beggars. The place may not be large, but it is usually well supplied with conveniences and labor-saving devices. One does not have to think about light or fuel or ice or ashes. Steam and gas, with refrigerating currents, are turned on by valves. Then, too, the apartment is fire-proof and generally burglar-proof. The whole family can go away for a day or for a year; the premises are guarded and no one has to worry about them. The burden of house-keeping is lifted at once, and the family becomes a boarder with the privacy of its own floor.

Of course there are compensatory losses. The rooms are small, often ill-lighted, and there are seldom enough of them to warrant family visiting. Even in the larger flats, where house-keeping is carried on with many servants, entertainment is never quite satisfactory. Then one misses his own doorstep, misses the family dog and cat, and, worst of all, the children miss their playground. The apartment is only a makeshift, and not a good substitute for a home, but it is the best the harried New Yorker can get. He does not want to travel morning and evening on the suburban trains, and his wife wishes to see something of city life, so the apartment-house yawns for him as inevitably as the East Side tenement-house for the penniless immigrant from Europe.

Money ameliorates the condition of the flat-dweller somewhat. There are apartments quite as commodious as houses, in which luxury sits enthroned and convenience



waits at every door jamb; and there are suites in hotels with private dining rooms and special servants that are designed and fitted up for aristocracy, or plutocracy, or anyone who cares to pay for them. The furnishing is most sumptuous, the service most elaborate, the facilities for easy living quite perfect; and yet somehow the inhabitants never quite rid themselves of the idea that they are tenants in common with others in a huge caravansary, and not in their own house. The same idea is borne in upon the poorer families living in Lexington Avenue boarding-houses, and comes to the nest of Italians curled up on the floor of a Mott Street tenement, but perhaps it frets them less. All of them are conscious of being in temporary possession only, occupying something that does not belong to them. It may be a simple bare room or an elaborate suite of rooms, but it is not home.

Dwelling-houses would seem to be very different, but in reality they still leave much to be desired. Time was, thirty or more years ago, when a brick house on Washington Square, a brown-stone front on Fifth or Madison Avenue or on a side street, meant home in a broad sense of the word; but New York was a small city then. Times have greatly changed. The brown-stones on the avenues have been metamorphosed into stores or been replaced by tall buildings; the houses on the side streets have been overhauled and remodeled; a number of brick houses still linger in Washington Square, but fashion no longer cares



to live there. The new residences that have come into existence on the side streets, along the Riverside Drive, along upper Fifth Avenue, are great improvements upon the old, but it is doubtful if they are so homelike as the old. They are infinitely more convenient, wonderfully more ornate, several times more expensive, but they are also less inhabited, less of a loadstone to the family, less permanent.

These new styles of domestic architecture are many and heterogeneous. Some of them are of Beaux-Arts origin, some are Colonial, some have New Art features, and some have no art whatever, but are simply buildings. They are more often made up of the pickings and stealings of many styles — attempts at the English town house, the French château, the Italian palace, with miscellaneous features lugged in from many quarters. But with all their sins of combination and over-ornamentation, they are, on the whole, successful in construction. Especially is this true of the houses on the side streets, built of brick with stone or marble trimmings, or of gray stone with balconies, square windows, and iron railings. They are unpretentious, substantial, livable. The gloom of the old brown-stone residence, lighted fore and aft only, has been dispelled by larger openings and by broad skylights, with the consequent results of more air and better hygiene. The high Dutch stoop, which was never other than an architectural abomination, is no longer employed.

The new houses have entrances on the curb line, and those that are merely remodeled have the stoop-rise on the inside in a short run of broad steps to the first floor. The grilles and vestibules are usually massive and simple, and the furnishing of the halls rather meager. Marble walls and flooring, with a table, a chair, and a rug, are usually considered sufficient.

But the drawing-room on the first floor more than atones for any austerity at the entrance. It is usually a wonder both in the quality and the quantity of the things it holds. Many of them resemble nothing so much as antique shops, and seem to require only the presence of a red flag and an auctioneer to begin a sale. The fad for things old has reigned in New York for years, and is still on the throne. The fact that many of the "antiques" bought in these days are bare-faced forgeries, or at best merely copies, does not seem to give anyone caution. People keep on buying them, keep on "furnishing" with them, until the drawing-room becomes unbearable, almost unthinkable. Tables and lounges with gilded legs, and old velvets for coverings, vie with tapestries and portières. Pictures on the walls share the decorative scheme with stained-glass windows, gilded wood-carvings, pieces of old sculpture, door jambs from Italian palaces, and mantels from French châteaux. Louis Seize cabinets back up against the walls and hold Chinese porcelains, silver, glass, miniatures; musical instruments of quaint designs are flung

down here and there with careful neglect; and scraps of old embroidery or Oriental frippery are tacked on chairs or carved benches.

It is all very costly, and some of it very beautiful; but one sadly wonders why it should litter up a place where people live. Can anyone be happy amid such a restless conglomeration of plunder, representing all ages and all countries, save our own? It may appear artistic, even learned or romantic, to be continually associated with archæological remains; to be playing on Beethoven's piano, or eating from Napoleon's plates, or reading by the lamp of some buried Cæsar; but it certainly is not comfortable, nor is it very sensible. It is too much of a strain at happiness; and that, too, without a breath of originality. The decorators around the corner will make the whole hodge-podge for you while you are away on a summer vacation. When you return in the autumn, you may walk in, take possession, and find a place to sit down, if you can. Of course, you can exist in such a bric-a-brac shop, and your wife's friends may come in to tea and admire it greatly, but there is nothing very homelike about it.

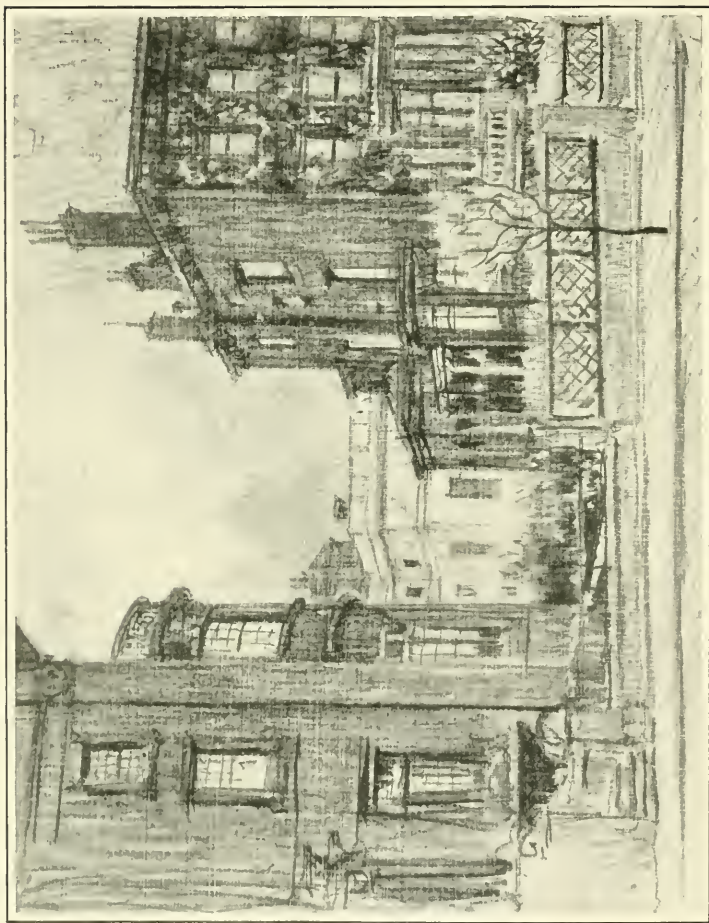
The "front parlor" in America never yet proved a joy to the family. In the early days of horse-hair cloth, old mahogany, and English carpets it was a place of gloom, — a closed-and-light-barred room, save when "company" came. Later on, in the era of black walnut, it became more ornate with Italian frescoes on the ceiling, velvet

carpets, red satin curtains, pier glasses set in carved or gilded frames, the inevitable black piano, and to balance it a piece of white tombstone sculpture, representing "Faith" or "Hope" — something well calculated to dispel both virtues from one's mind and heart.

But flat and tasteless as this latter style was, it was hardly more wearisome than the present one. You could ignore the "parlor," dodge it, go around it; but the drawing-room of to-day fixes you with its glitter, insists upon being seen. It is a museum. Fine as its contents may be (and many of the individual things are superb), their bringing together, their unrelated and discordant huddling in an inappropriate living room, in an unsympathetic household, in an absolutely foreign land, is a barbarity, — an imitated barbarity at that. When the ancients plundered from others, it was generally to fill a gap, to supply porphyry or marble or bronze where they had none of their own; but there is no such excuse for the Americans. We have abundant native materials at our feet, but we either discard them because they are familiar, as stupid people ignore field flowers, or we despise them because they are not old.

The library — I am still speaking of the interior of the fashionable house — is several degrees better than the drawing-room, in that it has fewer things in it. The books are usually superb in every way — nice editions, nice bindings, nicely placed on the shelves, nicely glassed, — but





PL. 50. — MADISON AVENUE HOUSES



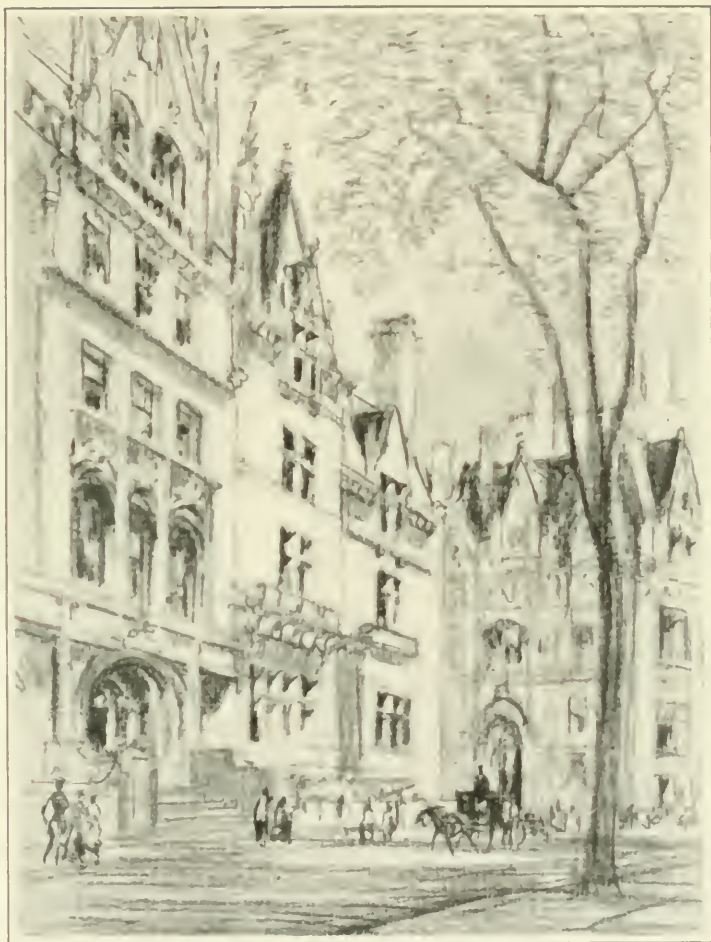
seldom read. The chairs are large and comfortable, the tables neatly layered with the latest magazines, the walls covered with engravings or pictures. Of course, there are Oriental rugs, Pompeian bronzes, and Greek vases scattered about, just to encourage a classic spirit. It makes a good room to show off to one's new friends while smoking after dinner. It intimates a taste on the part of its possessor for loftier things than are furnished by the world, the flesh, and "the Street." But, unfortunately, it pretends to more than it fulfills.

Possibly the dining room is the most useful room in the whole house, aside from the kitchen. It is usually commodious, convenient, and appropriate. Dinners occasionally are given for ten or maybe twenty guests, and night after night there are perhaps two or three intimate friends at the table. Spindle-legged furniture of great age and decrepitude would not answer for constant use. The chairs and tables are, therefore, of substantial materials, often of beautiful dark woods, rubbed smooth and left unadorned by carving or gilding of any sort. The linen and china are of corresponding excellence; but the glass is often too fine or too much cut, and the silver is usually over-ornamented. All told, however, the dining room with its paneling and portraits, its sideboards and china cabinets, is a good room. At times it looks a little like the private dining room of some fashionable hotel, but it is at least serviceable.

Upstairs in the dressing-rooms and bedrooms there is not so much display of antiquities, but a beautiful litter of things modern, with perhaps more pieces in one room than would comfortably furnish two. The keynote of quantity is struck by the dressing-table of the young lady of the house. It is usually strewn with enough superfluities in silver — brushes, trays, bottles, picture-frames, button-hooks, scissors, knives, paper-weights, thermometers — to start a small shop on a side street. The unhappy phase of it is that, while the quantity is so enormous, scarcely a piece of it is good in quality. A self-respecting gas man would hardly accept it as chandelier ornament. That it bears the names of great Fifth Avenue silversmiths is only so much the worse for the taste of the silversmiths. For the rest of the room there may be quantities of small pictures, many hangings and curtainings, many furbelows, and much lace work. These, with simple enough beds, chairs, and floor rugs against a background of large-patterned wall-paper or silk paneling, make up what is called the “color scheme” of the room.

From top to bottom this fashionable New York house has what are called “the comforts of home,” but not the home-like feeling. There is the reach for happiness — the attempt to gain it by and through possessions. Almost everything that the heart could wish for is there — books, pictures, bric-a-brac, hangings, furniture, the very glitter and the gleam of gold; — but the tyranny of things is





PL. 51. — FIFTH AVENUE HOUSES



there also. Happiness cannot be gotten out of possessions, nor homes bought with houses; and, sooner or later, the splendid town house becomes merely a gilded cage. Perhaps that is why so many of them are closed, boarded up, deserted, with the family out in the country or living around the corner in some fashionable hotel.

But this story belongs with the domestic skeleton, and is not brought out at the dinner-table. On the surface, everything is most alluring, most engaging; in consequence of which, perhaps, the influence of the fashionables is much wider than their numbers would warrant. For in a small way the poorer people — the clerks, shop-keepers, agents, and little place-holders — try to follow the rich, and in doing so they manage to overfurnish and bedizen their small quarters with atrocious bric-a-brac, plush-framed plaques, bad etchings, and ugly "art squares." Their table furniture and bedroom decorations are usually on the same plane of cheapness and worthlessness. The whole result is banal in the extreme. In it the home is perhaps no more apparent than in the houses of the rich.

Of course, the very poor of the East and West Sides, living in tenements or small houses, do not bother themselves with much furnishing of any kind. They buy what is necessary — generally inexpensive and badly made articles — and live from hand to mouth, from day to day, as best they can, quite regardless of art or fashion.

In this respect they are not strikingly different from the poor of London or Berlin or Vienna. The places where they live can hardly be called homes; they are merely haunts, districts where their fellows gather, habitations that are accessible or possible to them. Neither the very rich nor the very poor have homes in New York.

But every city or community is saved by its conservative element, and New York is not an exception. The quiet and unpretentious who are engaged in hundreds of professions and business enterprises, who domestically lead the simple life in modest houses and are not swayed by fashions or fads of any kind, must always be reckoned with. They are not usually remarked, because there is nothing very remarkable about either their lives or their habitations, except that in both there is the note of sanity. Thousands of such people and such places are to be found in New York — places where the furnishings are plain, comfortable, unobtrusive, and the family rather than the “antiques” lend the interest; where the functions and the guests are unannounced in the newspapers; where society in its best sense is to be found, and fashion in its worst sense rarely intrudes.

It is in such houses that one finds the nearest approach to homes that a great city is capable of maintaining. And yet even here the home feeling is, and must be from necessity, rather slight. The tenure of the house is too uncertain. The changes in the city, the continual encroachments



PL. 52. — THE ANSONIA

1893  
NEW-YORK  
SOCIETY LIBRARY

of the business section upon the residence section, the opening of new streets, the loss of fortunes, taxes, sudden deaths, all bring about forced sales. Twenty years is now a long time for a family to occupy the same premises. The average is less. Under such circumstances there can be no permanence — no feeling that what is builded up will not soon be pulled down — and, consequently, there is no faith in the stability of the home. That is perhaps generally true of all large cities, but it is peculiarly true of New York in its chronic state of rebuilding. Few there are who can stand still or find a permanent anchorage in it.

So it is that within the quietest of domestic circles there is more or less of uneasiness. The restlessness percolates brick and stone up town, as well as steel and cement down town. People keep pacing up and down, mentally, if not physically; and the nervous energy of business New York, though it may be subdued, kept in abeyance, is nevertheless present at the dinner-table of social New York. It is in the air, in the brain, in the blood. No one is quite free from it, save those who are beyond influences of any kind.





THE BOWERY





PL. XIV. — CHINATOWN







## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BOWERY

EVERYONE knows that New York is now a collection of cities, and not merely an aggregation of sky-scraper on the island of Manhattan. Some years ago the parent city expanded legally, took in its neighbors and its suburbs, and called itself Greater New York. The places that were caught in the net were Brooklyn, Long Island City, Staten Island, Coney Island, and a baker's dozen of villages. The area of the consolidated city is something quite startling; but as yet the consolidation is more on the map than in the mind of the average citizen. The insular in thought — and they are still a majority — keep harking back to the compact squares lying between the Battery and the Harlem, keep thinking of that as New York, with Brooklyn and beyond, as formerly, a part of the suburbs.

The Manhattan part of the city is, again, a collection of towns, if we divide by settlements and races. Every New Yorker is more or less familiar with such localities as Chinatown, Little Italy, Little Hungary; with such quarters as the French, the Scandinavians, or the Syrians

occupy; or with the ghettos that seem to spring up and multiply everywhere throughout the poorer portions of the city. Whenever a nationality gathers in a certain place, a reputation and a name attach, neither of them perhaps very savory. Unfortunately the foreign elements that come to the city in such numbers belong to the impetuous strata of humanity, and from necessity seek lodgings each with its own kind. When once located in their particular district, race and language continue to hold them there. Naturally these birds of a feather give a distinct character to their section of the city — a character that writers and painters are continually seeking to exploit under the name of “local color.”

But there is a broader ethnological division of Manhattan that may be made, and perhaps a more inclusive one. The backbone of the island running north and south is along Broadway, up Fifth Avenue, through the Central Park. This is the elevated portion of the island, where the cleanly, comfortable, well-to-do New Yorkers live — this is Upper New York. On both sides of this central ridge, sloping away toward the rivers, are depressed districts where people of an entirely different kind are brought together. These are the East and the West Sides where the tenement-houses spread over many blocks, where the foreign elements congregate, where the vicious and the unfortunate, the honest and the dishonest, the decent and the indecent, the law-abiding and the criminal, are all





PL. 53. — THE BOWERY



brought together by the gravity of circumstance — this is Nether New York.<sup>1</sup>

The division line between the Upper and the Nether city is rather sharply drawn. A step down from the ridge, a block or so away from Broadway, and you are in what used to be called "the slums." Here is the violent contrast once more, a contrast not merely between fine business blocks and ramshackle tenements, or between the well-to-do and the poverty-stricken; but between a house and a haunt, between cleanliness and dirt, between healthful quarters and the disease-breeding sweat-shops. The distinction is so positive, the difference so wide, that it can hardly be exaggerated. The opposite poles of humanity are likewise represented. The gap between the highest intelligence and social rank and the lowest animal existence seems reduced to a matter of a few streets. Over the edge of what the cosmopolitan enthusiast regards as little less than heaven, comes up the reek and the roar of that other place which the settlement workers regard as little better than a place of torment.

However, it is safe to say that many of the dwellers on the East Side do not consider their quarters so infernal as the Upper New Yorkers think them. They are not in continuous torment, otherwise they would not stay there. True enough, they have not the comforts that go with life

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer first made this distinction. See *The Century Magazine*, Vol. 27, p. 546.

on Fifth Avenue, but then people do not miss what they know nothing about. Besides, they have a Fifth Avenue of their own in which they are, perhaps, just as happy.

The Fifth Avenue of the East Side is the Bowery. Everyone knows the Bowery, because for years the magazine writers and illustrators have been making copy out of it. It has been regarded by some as the freak street of the town,—the place where one goes to laugh at the absurd and the queer, or to get sociological statistics in exaggerated form. Society used to go there, and to its tributary streets, some years ago on slumming expeditions. It does so still, and comes back to its up-town home better satisfied, perhaps, with its own quarters. Settlement workers and Charity Organization people go there, too; and some of them stay there to help better the social conditions. Besides these there are scores of the morbidly curious who visit the street seeking they know not what, and gaining only a dismal impression. All told, there are many different impressions brought up from the Bowery and its runways by different people.

Perhaps the most prevalent feeling among the visitors is pity for those who move along the wide thoroughfare — pity that they are so circumstanced, that they can know no better or higher life. Yet it is an open question if those who live on the Bowery or its tributaries, are really to be pitied, are really so badly off. They do not look so very doleful as one meets them on the street.

Beyond a doubt there are misery and misfortune, crime and vagrancy, through the haunts of the East Side; but they are not very apparent on the Bowery. Still the street is not so wildly gay nor its *habitués* so violently lively as they have been painted. There are gray faces there, faces that look lost or homeless or out-of-work. It is the thoroughfare of many thoughtlessly mirthful or genuinely happy working people, but it is also the beat of the weary, the friendless, the outcast, the dissipated, the submerged.

All classes are there — tradespeople, clerks, mechanics, truckmen, longshoremen, sailors, janitors, politicians, peddlers, pawnbrokers, old-clothes men, with shop-girls, sewing-women, piece workers, concert-hall singers, chorus girls. And all nationalities. It is one of the most cosmopolitan streets in New York. The Italians come into it from Elizabeth Street, the Chinese from Pell and Doyers streets, the Germans from beyond Houston Street, the Hungarians from Second Avenue, and the Jews from almost everywhere. Every street coming up from the East River may bring in a separate tale. Taken with a liberal sprinkling of Russians, Poles, Rumanians, Armenians, Irish, and native Americans from the west, north, and south, they make a much mixed assemblage. But there is no great variety of hue in it. The prevailing dress is rather somber, as well as frayed or shiny with wear. Occasionally a butterfly from the theater sails by; but the Bowery is not Fifth Avenue, nor even Mott

Street, in color-gayety. Sometimes one is disposed to think it a sad street.

What brings these people to the Bowery? Why, the same thing that draws the crowd in Upper New York to Fifth Avenue or Twenty-Third Street or Broadway. They are out shopping, or strolling, or gossiping, or meeting acquaintances, or bent on business. Why not? Humanity is very much the same in all circles and classes. The East Side does not live out of a pushcart exclusively. Occasionally it wants a better quality of food or clothing. Then it goes up to the Bowery and comes face to face with the cheap store. There it usually gets swindled, for the poor quality of the goods makes them dear at any price; but then they are "in style." And be it remembered that the style of the Bowery is just as invincible and omnipotent to the East Sider as that of Fifth Avenue to the Upper New Yorker. In fashion, as in life, there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so. As for the cost, it is the plain penalty of the thinking, wherever you go or buy.

But the Bowery is a great shopping street, nevertheless. Almost everything is purchasable there. Old-clothes men, with pushcarts in the gutter, sell boots, stockings, shirts, hats; peddlers trail along the curb hung deep with shoestrings and suspenders, or carrying trays of collar buttons and neckties; banana howlers and stale-strawberry venders address the second-story windows with



yells; the sidewalk showease, presenting women's garments, toilet articles, knick-knacks, and cheap ornaments, has its attendant "puller-in" who will sell you everything in the case "at a bargain"; and the cheap stores are bulging with polite managers who meet one at the door and leave no word unsaid that will induce an exchange of goods for money.

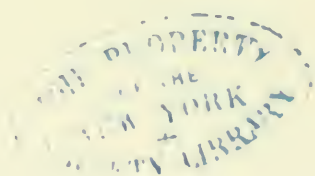
The store on the Bowery is unique in both its quantity and quality. There always seems to be an overstock of shirts, shoes, and trousers. Presumably the clothing that has been rejected from the Upper city because of waning styles, eventually finds its way to the Bowery, and is sold for what it will bring. How otherwise can one account for neckties at five cents and shirts at twenty cents, or trousers and shoes from seventy-five cents up? Everything is "marked down." The jewelry shops offer things at prices that compel attention. The seaman ashore or the countryman at sea cannot resist the allurements; besides, the "puller-in" usually warrants everything for an indefinite number of years. His next-door neighbor, the pawnbroker, — there are half a dozen on almost every block, — is also a perfectly reliable gentleman who promotes trade wholly to his own effacement and merely as a friend of the wandering stranger. Perhaps there is a shade more of affability about his take than his give; but then, of course, he has to live, poor soul.

The pawnshops and the second-hand establishments

come as near to the department store as anything the Bowery can offer. Almost anything can be had in them, from revolvers and musical instruments to furniture, crockery, and hardware. The articles have a battered look, but the average East Sider has gotten used to such appearances, having been hustled and elbowed himself most of his life. Yet he and his wife sometimes buy shrewdly enough and beat down the price to the last syllable of allotted patience. Money does not always come and go here with a Fifth Avenue freedom. Eventually it passes, but perhaps grudgingly, reluctantly. In the day's work quite a volume of business is done. It is not that of Broadway or Twenty-Third Street. There are no huge stores with their enormous sales; but for all that there is in the aggregate a good deal of buying and selling on the Bowery.

And, too, there is the same restless push and rush here as elsewhere in the city. The restaurants on the Bowery are striking epitomes of the New York rush. "Quick Lunch" is advertised almost everywhere, and carried out strictly according to programme. Your order is not infrequently yelled across the dining room, or roared down a dumb-waiter; and when it comes in, it is skidded off a tray and on to the table without preface or apology. Usually it is not a bad lunch. The prices asked make the squeamish visitor entertain notions of stale vegetables, "chuck" steaks, and over-ripe fruits; but the regular







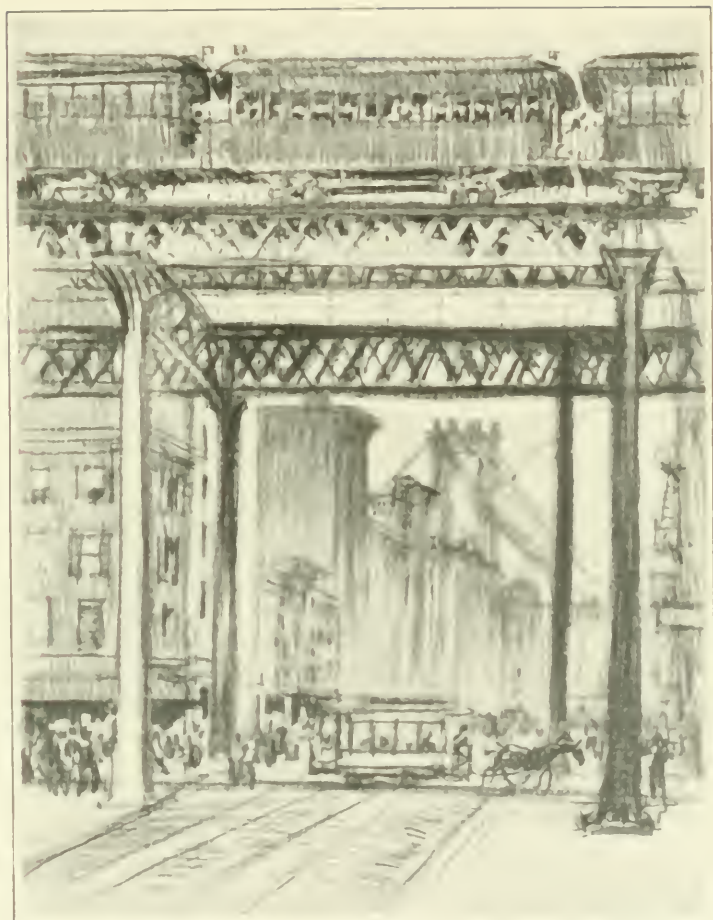
PL. 54. — ELEVATED ROAD ON THE BOWERY

*habitué* of the Bowery has no qualms about them. He eats and comes to no harm thereby. And he drinks Hungarian or Italian wines, or lager beer, and apparently comes to no great harm by them either. The cafés peculiar to the different nationalities are more centrally located in their various districts; but the Bowery is cosmopolitan enough to have all things for all men, from chop suey to goulash, and from stale beer to fine grades of Voslauer Goldeck.

And what amusement the Bowery furnishes to its easily amused people! The different races, the street types such as the pusheart man, the hawker, the puller-in, the gay girl, the flashy young man, the sailors in twos and threes, and the countryman in ones, are all amusement to the crowd. When it tires of these, it gathers in front of a dog-and-bird store, and watches with infinite zest puppies in the window quarreling about a bone, or guinea pigs milling about in a little pen, or canary birds, singing themselves sore in the throat, in a dirty little wooden cage. Anywhere along the Bowery there are superior inducements offered to see all the splendors of the world in a peep show for the reasonable sum of one cent. And many there be who look therein to witness such things as never were on land or sea. The shooting gallery, the museum of anatomy, and the snake show come higher but are worth more, being in their nature educational. The "barker" on the outside, who 'announces the

wonders to be seen, tells you all about this. He and his twin brother of the vaudeville or concert hall know what to say to attract attention. And they are experts at handling a crowd. They keep talking to the accompaniment of a blaring phonograph or a cheap German band or an orchestrion — anything to make a noise — and during the confusion tickets are sold, and the people are pushed in at the entrance.

In the theaters the prevailing language corresponds to the supporting constituency. The old Bowery Theater that once housed traditions of the English stage with the elder Booth, Edwin Forrest, and Charlotte Cushman, still stands to-day, but it now belongs more to the Hebrew than to the American, and performances are given there in German or Yiddish oftener than in English. At the side of it is the popular Atlantic Gardens, where vaudeville, music, beer, and the German language are largely provided each night. Farther up town is the Irving Place Theater, once more devoted to Germans; and as high up on Madison Avenue as Fifty-Eighth Street there is still another German theater. The language seems to prevail on the East Side. Not but what there are other tongues. The Italians crowd into the Teatro Italiano on the Bowery, as the Chinese into the queer little theater on Doyers Street, or the Irish into Miner's; but there is always someone at your elbow who speaks German, or some kindred dialect. In other quarters of the



PL. 55. — ACROSS THE BOWERY LOOKING EAST

PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY

city there are colonies where one hears only Syrian, Greek, Russian, Rumanian, Hungarian; but on the Bowery, though all nationalities meet and talk each its own language, there is, aside from English, a preponderance of German and Yiddish.

The babel of tongues makes more of a noise than one would imagine. There are four lines of street cars running up the Bowery, besides the roaring elevated overhead and innumerable vans, trucks, beer wagons, delivery wagons, and pushearts rattling over pavements and through side streets. If the mob would make itself heard, it must shout above this din of traffic. As a result, almost everyone there speaks explosively, talks much with his hands, and expresses acceptance or dissent with his head. At the Chatham Square end of the Bowery, where the elevated makes a junction with its Second Avenue line, the uproar is increased. The crowd presses closely to hear what the patent-medicine fakir is saying, the policeman bends over with his hand on your shoulder to get your question, the "puller-in" drags you into his store and shuts the door to hear his own voice. The Bowery is a noisy, reverberating street. The roar of tongues and traffic is always rising from it.

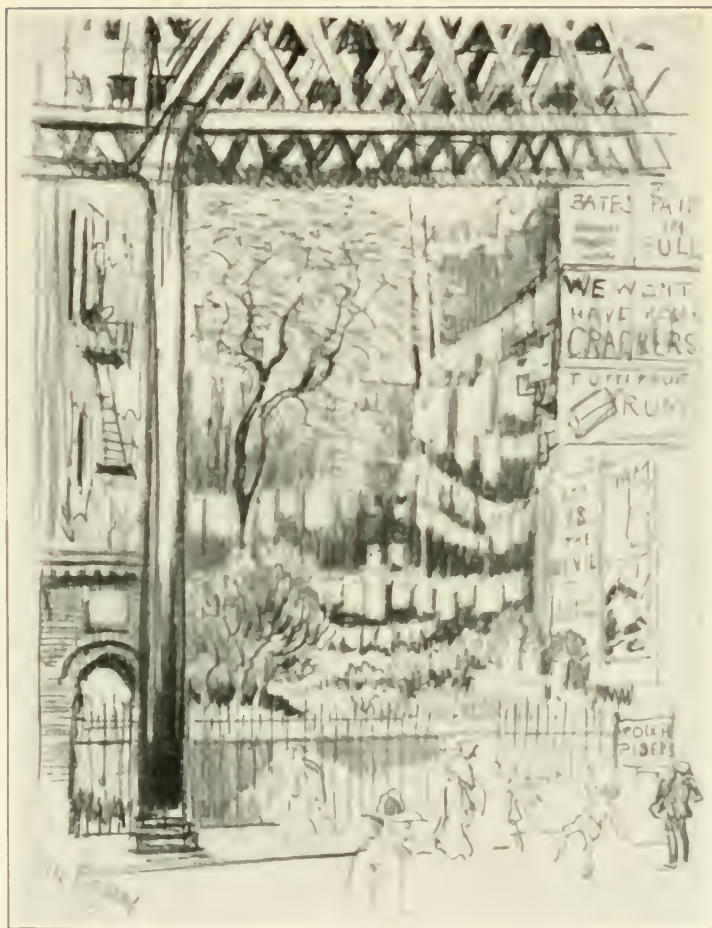
Quite different, all this, from two hundred years ago. Then the wide thoroughfare was a country road running out to the farms (bouweries) of the wealthier Dutch settlers of Manhattan; and the Stuyvesants, Beeckmans,



and others in square-toed shoes trudged along it, perhaps with guns on their shoulders for protection against Indians. Afterward the road was extended the whole length of the island — the first one of its kind — and in time it became the old post-road leading into New England. With the British occupation of the city, camps were established along it. Several drinking-places sprang up in the neighborhood of the camps, and the evil of them, say the temperance people, has persisted on the street to this day. No doubt the saloon's line of descent has remained unbroken from those times to these, but the British soldiery should not be unduly blamed for it. There are quite as many saloons on Seventh and Eighth avenues as on the Bowery, and they are all of pure enough American ancestry.

But the saloon is about the only thing on the Bowery that has persisted. Everything else, except the corrupted name, has faded out. The Bowery Boy is now merely a tradition, and yet he came and went in our own time. The old volunteer fire department, of which he was part and parcel, brought him into existence. He ran with his particular engine, and fought with his particular gang — fought other gangs with perhaps more vim than fires. He was in some sort of a row almost daily; if not on the street, then in the gallery of the old Bowery Theater, where his face and his fist were always sufficient passport. He was a picturesque "tough" with an original vocabulary





PL. 56. — JEWISH CEMETERY (NEAR BOWERY)

RECEIVED  
AT THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY  
1875

and a variegated costume ; and everyone, even Thackeray, found him an amusing study.

The Bowery Boy went out with the trees that used to line the historic roadway, and has been succeeded by the bad young man of more or less foreign extraction, with nothing distinctive about him except his cheapness and his vulgarity. Many of the older types and characters that bartered and sold on the Bowery have passed on, too. They have been driven out, drowned out by the wave of foreigners that has inundated the East Side in the last dozen years. Nothing lasts for any length of time in this new Western Continent. New York is its representative city in this respect, and in it all things — homes, buildings, people, streets, the Bowery as well as Broadway — are swept along in a shifting panorama of change.



THE TENEMENT DWELLERS





PL. XV. BLEECKER STREET

PLATE XX. BEEHIVE, JERSEY.







## CHAPTER XV

### THE TENEMENT DWELLERS

As one goes down the side streets leading from the Bowery to the East River — almost any one of them will furnish illustration — he notices many and increasing changes. The buildings are usually of brick with perhaps stone or terra-cotta trimmings, not small in proportions nor mean in entrances, but marred in appearance by many iron fire-escapes that descend in flights to the street. The fire-escapes are often littered with sorry-looking clothing, boxes, or cans; the blinds and doorposts are grimy with finger marks, the windows are dirty and often broken, and the steps and areaways are worn smooth with the shuffle of many feet. The streets are just as wide, and cleaned perhaps as often as the other streets of the city, but there are rows and rows of pushcarts that occupy the gutters, and the refuse from them makes the streets appear unkempt and uncared for.

Business after its kind goes on here as elsewhere, all sorts of shops are open, trucks rumble over the pavements, people come and go with bundles and baskets. And there is the same crowding and huddling of people as on Broad-

way, — only more so. The East Side is possibly the most congested district in the world. Figures are forthcoming from sociologists to show how many hundreds live on a block, or how many thousands live in a square mile of these tenements; but the passer-by does not need the figures. He can see for himself some thousands, at least, without leaving the curb. In warm weather the doorways exude humanity, and the windows fairly bulge with people. The protrusions of heads, arms, and elbows seem forced by the pressure of people from within. The fire-escapes and roof lines and cellar-areas hold their quota again. As for the streets, they are always full of half-grown children, while the sidewalks are more or less strewn with crawling babies. The stranger steps over them, and is lucky if he does not step on them. Always and everywhere are children, children, children.

The cross-streets running parallel with the Bowery — Orchard, Ludlow, Allen, Catherine, Market, or almost any other in that region — are even worse than the side streets. Along them there are rows and rows of three-story buildings, with shops below and tenement quarters above, all somewhat the worse for wear, all hung with fire-escapes, all crowded and overflowing. Even the cellars are sometimes occupied for living quarters in defiance of law. Occasionally there is an alley or small court that runs back or across the rear of the buildings, with its accumulation of rubbish and wretched out-houses where

children play, and women sit, and thieves have their runways and hiding-places.

These are the tenements, where people gather by the scores in small, ill-ventilated rooms, and ply the sewing-machine, making cheap clothing. Men, women, and children work in these sweat-shops, eat there, sleep there. On almost every floor is the common hallway where people wash. Nothing is private. The inhabitants are tenants in common of all the liberty and all the license of the tenement.

In such rookeries, where dozens of families live in the same nest and each one is in the other one's way, there is a continual round of evil communication, foul talk, thieving, brawls, fights, and often murders. The respectable poor, cast there by temporary loss of work perhaps, begin to feel the contamination at once. In the acceptance of charity they lose self-respect, and, possibly, in a short time they are pauperized — quite willing to be helped and taken care of by others. The next step is vagrancy, with its attendant evils. Drink takes the place of food with the men and women, the young girls become depraved, the children frequent the alleys and the gutters rather than the schools. Degeneracy is swift and demoralization sure. It is almost impossible to uphold decency in such circumstances.

Then comes in disease to lend an added horror to the scene. Tuberculosis is in the lead; and all the train of

ills contingent upon insufficient food, bad sanitation, foul air and evil habits, follow after. The small children bear the brunt of the attack, or rather they succumb to it; but all classes feel it. In the winter, crowded in small, ill-ventilated rooms for warmth, pneumonia ferrets them out; in summer, with the heat puffing in at the windows and the buzz of flies in the air, they are victims of intestinal troubles. Such a combination of miseries, such a welter of poverty, crime, and disease, make the well-to-do shudder, the charitable over-sympathetic and perhaps over-zealous, and the sociologists and settlement workers indignant. And not without cause.

This is not the place to thresh out the question of the tenements, and yet one cannot jump over it or push around it in a search for the picturesque or the commercial in New York. It comes up insistently with a "What can be done to stop the misery?" The charity organizations and the settlement workers have given answer, but it is not an altogether satisfactory answer. The substance of it is, Help the tenement dwellers to get on their feet, help them to get work, to live better, to be better mentally, morally, physically. Unfortunately, that is what a great many of them — the paupers, the vagrants, the criminals — do not want and will not have. Reclamation is something that even the socialist becomes pessimistic over at times. The outlook there is not encouraging.

Mr. Robert Hunter, a man of much experience, rather

insists that government do its duty and provide properly for the children, the sick, the crippled, the criminal, and also those in poverty. As regards the crippled and the helpless, whether old or young, everyone will agree that Mr. Hunter's remedy is the right one. For those who are merely pauperized or poverty-stricken perhaps the remedy is objectionable for no other reason than because it helps humanity. It is doubtful if people can be helped without harm resulting therefrom. A crutch is a convenient thing to lean upon, but how quickly it takes the place of a leg and renders the latter useless. What government has already done in schoolhouses, hospitals, almshouses, penitentiaries, Mr. Hunter deems insufficient. He would improve and better them, extend their scope and inclusion, make them more effective and — comfortable. There it is again. Making things comfortable for people is to cripple their own exertions toward the same end. Carry their burdens, and they will let you carry to the end of the chapter.

Mr. Riis, another man of much experience with the slums and the tenements, has a different remedy. He would abolish the tenements, erect new and sanitary buildings with light and air, give the East Side family a chance at privacy and a home, and the children more schools, parks, and playgrounds. He insists that the tenement is the root of the evil, that it is badly constructed, ill-ventilated, a hot-bed of crime and disease. He is quite



right about the hot-bed, but is the building alone to blame? The same buildings housed respectable families in old New York fifty years ago, but there came from them neither murders nor contagions. Up town in the New York of to-day one finds scores of apartment-houses where there are small, half-dark bedrooms, opening on narrow air-shafts, where people live (and pay high rents for the privilege); but again they do not produce crime or disease. Moreover, it should be noted that the situation has been greatly improved in the last five years by new tenements that are better types of housing in respect to light, ventilation, and general sanitary conditions, in conformity to new laws; but the East Side remains practically the East Side.<sup>1</sup> Is it the tenement that is so very bad, or is it the crowding of the tenants that produces the evil? If the East Side populace were transferred to the Central Park, with the blue sky only for a roof and fresh air all around, there would still crop out disease and crime from overcrowding. The military camp, and that too under strict discipline, often proves as much.

The pleas for better homes, family privacy, children's playgrounds, more sunshine—in short, better living and

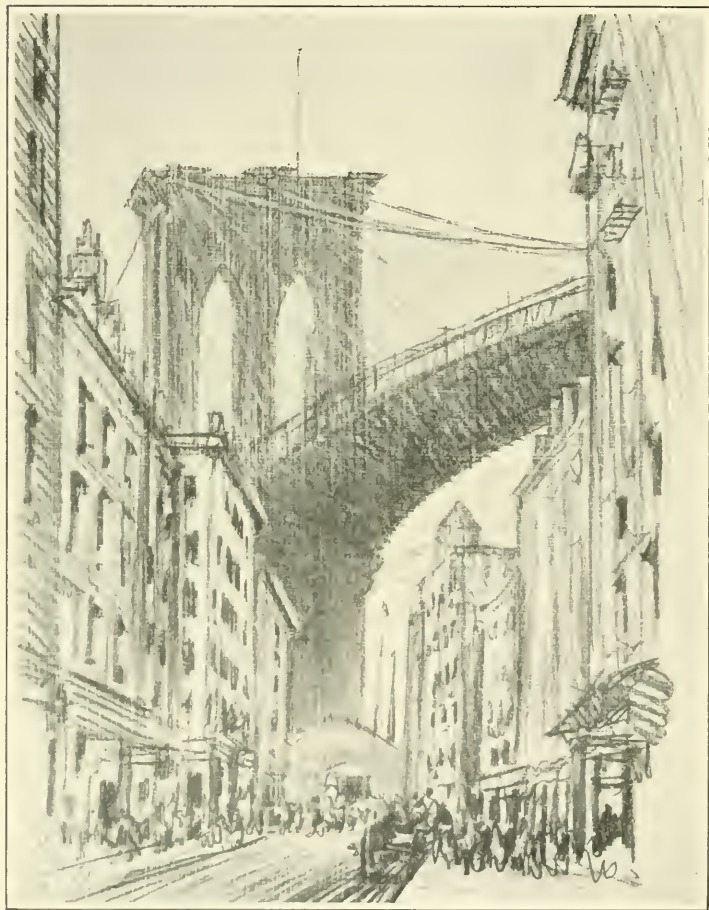
<sup>1</sup> The tenants in the new model tenements are chiefly American, German, English, Scotch, Irish, French, and Scandinavian. The Russians, Poles, Greeks, Sicilians, Jews, Slovaks, who are so largely responsible for the crowding of the East Side, apparently do not care for the improved conditions.



PROPERTY

1879

NOV 27



PL. 57. — TENEMENTS NEAR BROOKLYN BRIDGE

greater comfort — are, however, well made. A better living should be provided. But neither the charitably disposed, nor the landlord, nor the city government, should provide it. The tenant should maintain himself and his family. Adversity is often galling, depressing, exhausting; but the breadwinner who emerges from it does so with more self-respect, a stronger will, a greater confidence, than ever. It is the making of the man.

But self-help, it is well argued, is not possible for all those on the East Side — not possible at least within the city's limits. There are over a hundred thousand tenements and over a million of the poorer class of tenants in New York. There is hardly proper breathing space on the island for such a mass, to say nothing of comfortable homes and playgrounds. To improve the tenements is perhaps a temporary makeshift. And besides, it results immediately in a new influx of tenants from without to take advantage of the improved conditions. The line of least resistance, whether it be a bread line or pleasant tenement conditions, is sure to be followed. The underlying evil of congestion is not even scotched.

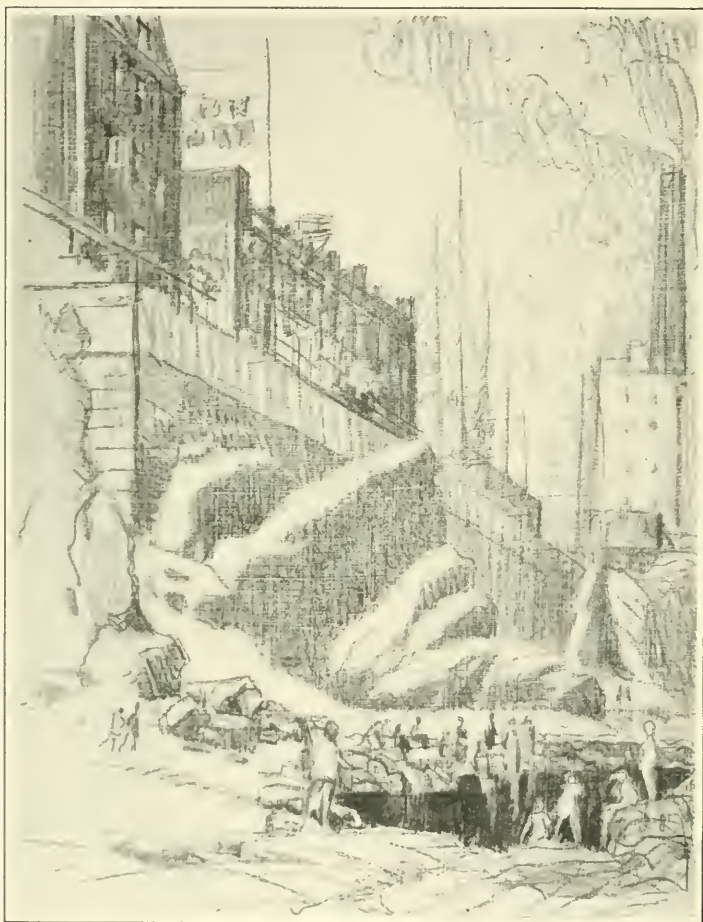
To the cry of Mr. Riis, "Abolish the tenements!" there may be suggested an alternative. Why not abolish the tenants? Not all of them. There must, of course, be working people living in the city, and presumably there always will be factories to supply a large part of

them with work, though perhaps they might better be located out of the town; but there are certain undesirable citizens, masquerading as "working people," who crowd the tenements and congest the city to the danger point, who might be eliminated from the problem, by forcing them to live elsewhere. Force (not necessarily physical) will be necessary, for of their own accord these people will not live outside the city. Rapid transit, a decent home in the country, plenty of fresh air and sunshine, with steady work, have been tried and found to be without charm or interest for them. They prefer the crowded quarters of the town, with all their vice and squalor and misery and crime.

The undesirable class that should be abolished is the criminal, the vagrant, the beggar, the pauper, the man who works only when the job is easy and agreeable, and the man who insists upon working himself and his family to death in the sweat-shops. If these could be forbidden the city, a large percentage of the misery, vice, and disease of the present tenement would be done away with at once. But how is it to be accomplished?

If there is any virtue in our boasted home rule of municipalities, then a city should be able, by law, to exclude the vagrant and the pauper classes. It might not be possible to do this by a threat of prosecution, as sometimes criminals are driven out by the police; but it could be done, perhaps by taxation. In Berlin, for instance,





PL. 58. — EAST RIVER TENEMENTS

the stranger finds, after a ten days' or a two weeks' stop in the city, that he is visited by a tax-collector, who insists upon his contributing to the municipal purse. This is direct taxation, which cannot be levied by our United States government, but may be levied by our state or city governments. A small specific sum for each person coming to live in the city (say, ten dollars or more a head, payable upon entrance and punishable by imprisonment and deportation if evaded) would not exclude the worthy, the capable, and the industrious, but would shut out practically the criminal, the vagrant, and the pauper classes which now make the slums, and sow the city with plague spots, and burden the tax-payer for their support.

Again, it might be possible through the Health Department to regard the tenements as public nuisances, and thus cause their abatement; or by regarding them as a menace to the public health, to insist that there be only so many people allowed on each city "block," or in each house, or on each floor of a house. There is already some prescription of the number of cubic feet of air that each tenement-occupant must have; but it is almost impossible to prevent its evasion. As soon as the inspector's back is turned, the rooms fill up again with "boarders" or "relatives"; and the old crowding goes on, even in the newest and most improved tenements. Still, it should be possible for the modern city to rid



itself of its criminal and vagrant classes. As a measure of self-protection it is being forced upon the consideration more and more each day. New York is not bound, either in law or in common humanity, to feed, clothe, and harbor all the undesirables that steamship lines bring to it from abroad. And it is the duty of Congress to lend a hand by stopping such people from coming into the country in the first place.

We are now nearer to the gist of the matter. Congress with its suicidal *laissez-faire* policy as regards immigration, by permitting Europe to send us any kind of immigrants it pleases, is directly responsible for the overcrowded tenements of the city. In round numbers, a million immigrants a year arrive at the port of New York. Of these fully three-quarters (750,000) are of very questionable desirability, to say the least. They are Russians, Poles, Bohemians, Lithuanians, Greeks, Rumanians, Slovaks, Armenians, Sicilians. They are the class that do not go to the farm, but to the city; and if they work at all it is in the sweat-shop, the factory, and the mine. They benefit the steamship lines that bring them here by some twenty dollars a head; they furnish a cheap unskilled labor for the manufacturer and the mine operator; and they burden and render miserable whatever city or community they settle in. Naturally, the poorest and most worthless of the 750,000 never get any farther than their port of entry — New York. They



go over to the East Side and help on the misery there. Each year as the crowding increases Charity girds its loins and sends forth an extra appeal; <sup>1</sup> the bread lines are extended until the police are forced to break them up; socialism and anarchy parade, talk, importune, and threaten; and the torrent of woe in the tenements grows wider and deeper.

Mr. Hunter and others, in intimate touch with conditions, state that most of the poverty-stricken in the cities are foreigners, that ninety-five per cent of the slum-dwellers are of foreign birth, and again that over fifty per cent of the paupers and the insane are foreign-born. The settlement workers practically unite in testimony to the effect that the most incorrigible slummers, paupers, and vagrants are the Italians and the Jews. The United Hebrew Charities keeps reporting something over one hundred thousand Jews in New York who are unable to supply themselves with the immediate necessities of life. The report if made for the other nationalities put down among the undesirables would not be essentially different. And on one point all the settlement workers are once more practically united. The American-born of this foreign parentage is the most vicious criminal of them all.

So it seems that the city is supporting, not alone its own indigent and poverty-stricken, not alone its own

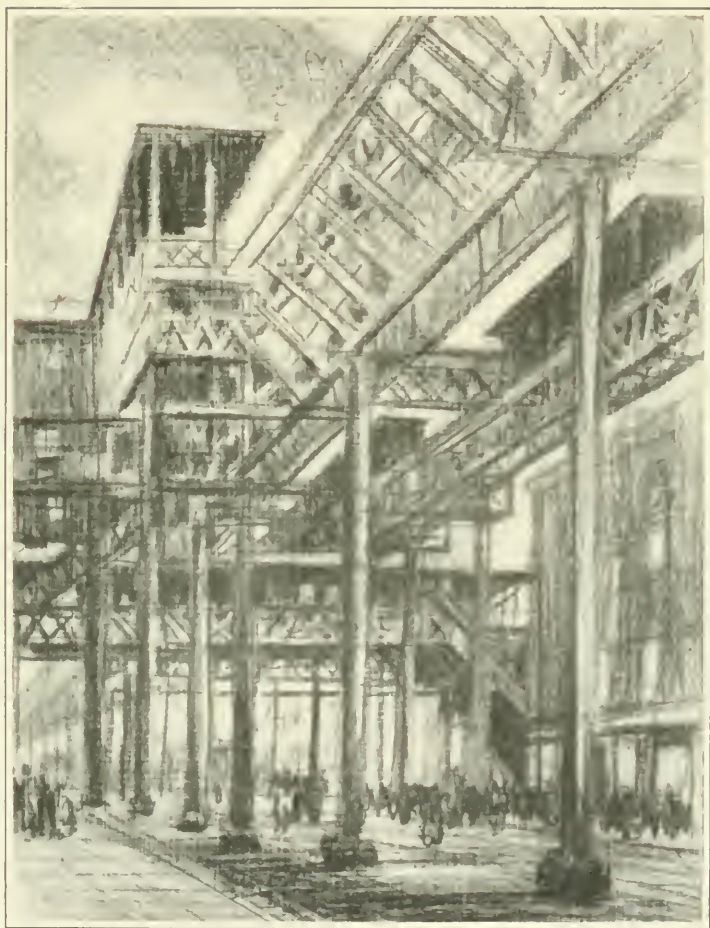
<sup>1</sup> New York pays out annually about ten millions of dollars to charitable and helpful institutions. This is done by the city government alone. The sum expended by private charity in addition cannot be accurately computed.

paupers and vagrants, but those of other countries that are dumped upon New York docks by devil-may-care steamship companies. "We have Russia's poverty, Poland's poverty, Italy's poverty, Hungary's poverty, Bohemia's poverty — and what other nations have we not?"<sup>1</sup> How shall the city ever improve the East Side and its tenements with yearly a heavier influx than before of just this element? How shall the police cope with crime when it keeps increasing with the continued coming of these foreign hordes? Once more, it is the plain duty of Congress to stop this immigration, or else assume the responsibility for it instead of putting it on the shoulders of New York. The undesirables should be turned back at the entrance of the harbor, if not earlier, by United States law. Failing in that, the city should close its door and open it only on the payment of an admission fee (a suitable tax) that would prohibit the worthless element from entering.

But what are the unfortunates without the gates to do? Where are they to go? They do not like living in the country, they are not farmers, they are not even mechanics or good ordinary day-laborers. They have always been used to the city and city life. What are they to do?<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, so long as these people remain

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, *Poverty*, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> The reports of the Jewish Agricultural Aid Society, with Baron de Hirsch's money behind it, emphasizes, by the poverty of its figures, the difficulties of doing anything with the Jews as farmers; the Armenians



PL. 59. — ELEVATED ROAD ON SECOND AVENUE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY

without the gates, New York does not have to answer those questions. It can ignore them. And if it chose to fling back savagely, "Go to the farms and small villages and work there, or go back to the country from which you came," no one could gainsay either the frankness nor the justness of the answer. Why should the beggar be such a chooser of what he likes or dislikes? Those who made the United States and those who are now upholding the country, native and foreign alike, have not asked about the work before them whether they liked it or not; they have taken hold of it and done it. No man in this western world does exactly as he pleases except this same pauper, vagrant, and criminal. It is perhaps time he was compelled to do his duty rather than allowed to do his pleasure.

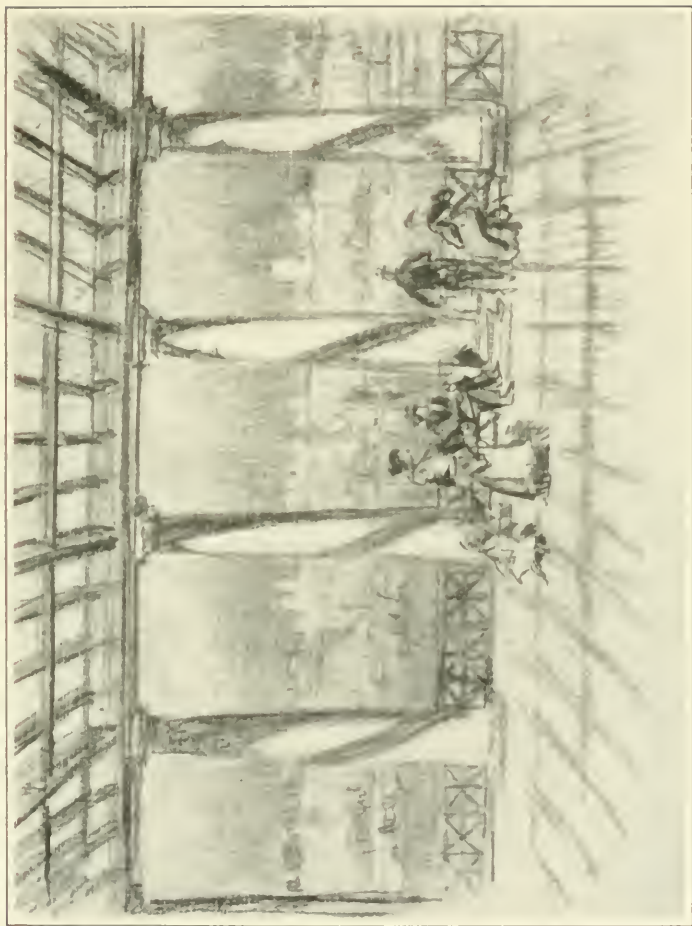
And a measure of compulsion would do no harm to the same class already within the city. There has been perhaps too much charity, too much help. Humanity is that strange contrary animal which, if one seeks to lift it up, will insist upon getting down; and if pushed down, it will insist upon getting up. The pauper and the vagrant would not only be a surprise to himself, but a benefit perhaps to the town if he were arbitrarily set to work on the public streets. Getting for him comfortable and Turks and Greeks are peddlers and shop-keepers rather than laborers; the Sicilians will work in railways and tunneling, but they prefer city employment of a political nature — leaning on a broom in the Street Cleaning Department, for instance — if they can get it.

and convenient jobs, encouraging him to work, helping him along by advice, example, and praise — how many, many times the settlement workers have reported the futility of this! Why not take a leaf from the experience of Berlin? Why not use some compulsion?

All of which sounds harsh in judgment and seems wanting in sympathy. But why should not one's sympathy go out to the just as well as to the unjust? Why not sympathize with the city rather than with those who would ruin it? There is no under-dog in the fight. That simile is almost always misleading. The only person who is holding down the vagrant is himself. Putting him upon his feet and giving him a shoulder to lean upon have failed most lamentably. Other nations have compelled him, out of his own strength, to get upon his feet and stand there. There are no such slums as ours in German cities; there are no East Sides in Stockholm; there are no beggars or vagrants in Switzerland. We might profit by their experience.

Such at least is the feeling of the average person who turns this tenement question over and over, seeking an answer. It seems almost impossible to help or improve conditions by kindness or charity, and one wonders if there might not be some virtue in resisting them. A city must protect itself or suffer the consequences of neglect. New York must do something with its East Side. It is not merely an objectionable spot to munici-





Pl. 60. — RECREATION PIER.





pal art societies — something that mars the beauty of the city — or an item of expense to the tax-payer and the charitably disposed; it is a menace to the public health, a prolific source of contagion. Worst of all, it is a sink of crime and immorality. It is not creditable to New York. It is one of the city's most hideous features, one of its most violent and forbidding contrasts.



CITY GUARDIANS





PL. XVI.—SECOND AVENUE









## CHAPTER XVI

### CITY GUARDIANS

WHEN one becomes involved in the tenement problem, and sees for himself how the other-half lives, the East Side is no longer amusing or attractive. The very poverty, squalor, and disorder of it, with the helter-skelter of crazy buildings and vivid colors, may be picturesque enough; but even the artist cannot be interested in it for long. People go there from Upper New York on slumming expeditions with the same morbid curiosity that takes the people of Nether New York to the Morgue; but the horror of the one is the horror of the other, and a taste for either is not healthy. The East Side is a repellent place, a place where people die in the attempt to live; and perhaps too much has been said about it already.

And yet there are other dark features of the city that are not to be slipped by unmentioned if one would make a fair survey and a candid commentary. New York is not all atune to the hum of profitable business; prosperity is not obtrusively in evidence everywhere throughout its limits. The mere fact that ten people out of every hundred among the poor dying within the city limits, are

buried in the Potter's Field — buried three deep at that — would give one quite a different notion.

As intimated some pages back, these poor are not exclusively of New York growth, not all of home manufacture. Yet immigration is not to be blamed for everything. There is a West Side as well as an East Side, where pauperized Americans live in brick shanties, where negroes and poor whites and Irish-Americans gather in forlorn quarters, and where poverty, crime, and disease are almost as prevalent as elsewhere in the city. Moreover, right through the heart of the Upper City, between the two dismal Sides, cuts that Great White Way, which has for its high-light the district known as "The Tenderloin" — a feature truly enough American, and not the less of a blotch and a patch on the city because illuminated by electricity, and made gaudy by the extravagance of the foolish.

To the rural visitor from Olean or Skowhegan "The Tenderloin" at night looks very attractive, is bubbling over with mirth, or wildly hilarious with champagne. It is "a great sight," and the gay ladies who furnish the laughter and help drink the champagne seem to lead a charmed life; but when the play is done and the curtain falls, the faces under their rouge show anything but gayety. Many before them have laughed the same laughter and gone their way, because "The Tenderloin" has no use for tears; but the "gay time" is

PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY



PL. 61. — POLICE HEADQUARTERS

simulated, and the life itself is just as hideous after its kind as any to be found in the dens of the hopeless or the dives of the submerged.

The Great White Way is the place where the rapid career usually begins, and the East Side is often the place of its ending. For the processes of degeneracy may finally land the one-time *habitué* of "The Tenderloin" into the pitiless precincts of the Bowery, or the darkness of the Mott Street opium-joints. "The Tenderloin" is always full of evil promise. Here is where crime is born and brought to maturity. Here is where the police throw out their first drag-net for the defaulter, the embezzler, the forger, the well-dressed thief. Most of the race-track, the pool-room, the bucket-shop people belong here; and confidence men, badger-game men, with pickpockets and ordinary swindlers, are always in its offing, keeping a weather-eye open for prey. The gay ladies sooner or later become the stool-pigeons of the swindlers and help them in their hawking. Such criminals as these seem more cunning than brutal, but perhaps they are more dangerous for that very reason. The police have to keep them on the blotter all the time. "The Tenderloin" is perhaps under stricter surveillance than the Bowery and its purlieus.

And yet on the surface New York, both Upper and Nether, seems to be a well-ordered, law-abiding city. The stranger who strolls along the avenues, or even

through the ill-reputed Sides, meets with no overt act of lawlessness, sees no murders or robberies, hears no disturbances, knows no horrors. But each year there are something over one hundred and seventy-five thousand prisoners brought to the bar in the various police courts of the city. They are not all charged with stealing, though the loss of property reported at the police stations through burglaries amounts to fifteen or twenty millions a year. There are among the prisoners many thugs, yeggmen, whyos, up for criminal assault; many members of gangs that belong on the Bowery, or Cherry Street, or in Harlem, or along the far avenues, arrested for "doing" each other; many hold-up men, long-shore crooks, and harbor ruffians, with some blackmailers belonging to the Black Hand or other organizations of criminals. Then there are the vagrants, those charged with being "drunk and disorderly," the irresponsible, the suddenly insane. Indeed, one hardly knows what New York would do if the police were not on hand to keep the lawless and the violent in restraint.

It is generally supposed that the police of a city have but one duty to perform, namely, to arrest law-breakers; but the New York police have other things than that on their schedule. The department is broken up into many divisions, with just as many different functions as there are divisions. Aside from the regular patrolmen there is the Sanitary Squad, that has to do with enforcing

health regulations; the Traffic Squad, that regulates the traffic of the great thoroughfares; the Court Squad, that is in attendance on the courts; the Boiler Squad, that examines engines, boilers, and engineers. Then again there are squads that do special duty in special places, such as the Steamboat, Harbor, Bridge, and Park police; and the picked men that serve along such thoroughfares as Broadway or about the railway stations. Wherever the place of service, the facilities for swift action and concentration of forces are furnished either in horses or bicycles or boats or patrol wagons. The police move swiftly—too swiftly for the average law-breaker's comfort.

The bureaus of the department emphasize, again, the many functions of the police. For examples, there are the Detective Bureau, with its interesting machinery for the detection of crime and criminals, and the Bureau of Information, which looks up the antecedents of the several hundred people each year who are "found dead" in the city, takes charge of and finds out about the youthful "runaways" who come to the city because tired of their home life in the country, returns each year several thousand "lost" children, looks after people run over or killed in the city streets, gathers information about the unknown suicides. Then there are the License Bureau, which has to do with the thousands of applications for licenses, the Lost Property Office, where one can recover his belongings by proper identification of



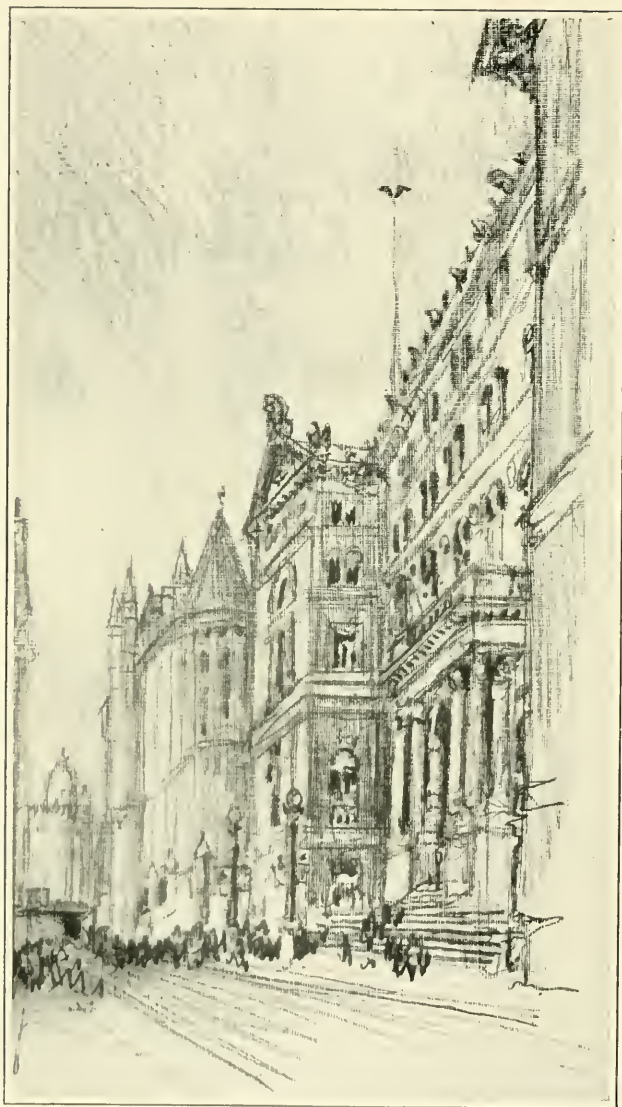
them, the Bureau of Encumbrances, which performs all sorts of no man's duties, and the House of Detention, — "the prison of the innocent," — where witnesses are held pending trials.

Again, the police not only patrol the streets, but they control crowds, regulate public amusements, help the ambulances, stop the fast-driving automobiles, send in fire-alarms, act as witnesses, guard the election booths and boxes, keep order in the courts, ferret out criminals for the District Attorney, haunt the railroad stations for arriving crooks, — in short, watch over the whole city that it may come to no harm. It has been said that they watch the city and the criminal classes to their own profit, that they themselves are corrupt and accept bribes and hush-money, that they blackmail the saloons, the bagnios, and the pool-rooms, growing wealthy out of their double dealing. The charge is easily made, since it is general and hits no one in particular; and, sometimes, it is specifically made and proved. It would be strange if out of nine or ten thousand men, with almost unlimited power in the matter of blackmail, there were not some wanting in honesty. What then! Is the whole force "rotten" in consequence?

It is true again that occasionally a man is dismissed from the force for cowardice; but who has ever suggested that the police as a body were wanting in courage? As they come out of the police-stations in squads of eight







PL. 62. — CRIMINAL COURT BUILDING

or ten to go on duty, you may notice that practically all of them have smooth and young-looking faces, that their lips shut close as the jaws of a steel trap, and that their chins are often a bit "under-shot" like bulldogs'. From their faces alone you know that the police are not lacking in courage, that they are not afraid of thief or thug or trouble of any kind.

Have they not proved their bravery again and again? Read the deeds of the honor men who have medals on their coat lapels; or read almost any day in the newspapers, the stopping of runaways by the mounted police in the Central Park, or the perilous rescues at fires. Read the annals of the Harbor Squad, and the scores of times the police have gone overboard into the floating ice of mid-winter to save some poor wretch fallen off a dock in the dark. Read the stories of the Bridge Police and their thrilling adventures with accidents and suicides high up in the air above the East River. Even the bicycle men, who hold up speeding automobiles, convince one that grit belongs to the police either by education or inheritance or tradition. A man cannot remain on the force for long without it.

And when did the police ever run from a mob, or give up a prisoner without a fight, or fail to close in on a thief because he pointed a pistol? Occasionally a man has been outnumbered, or in the face of certain death has declined to attack single-handed a band of thugs; but he has usually forfeited his baton and shield, and quit the

force in consequence thereof. And many a patrolman has been killed outright because of being too brave, because of attacking against overwhelming numbers.<sup>1</sup>

New York is proud of its police force, and keeps reiterating that it is the very "finest" in all the world — a statement that is not modest but has a good deal of truth in it. Certainly as one sees the police at the annual parade, swinging down Fifth Avenue, six thousand strong, there is a feeling that it is an invincible body of men. It marches well; it is precise, alert, disciplined. The men may be relied upon to obey orders absolutely, and to move, attack, and shoot, in case of a riot, as a united body. The mob of the future that can stand up before their moving columns will have more courage than any of its predecessors; and the rescuing party that can break through their solid square or marching diamond will need Gatling guns to prepare the way.

The mounted police, moving fourteen abreast, keep the line formation quite as well as the foot police. They are perfectly drilled, moving each man and horse like a centaur, each line like a solid column. Even the bicycle men and the drivers of the patrol wagons are infused with the military spirit. Precision, accuracy, obedience are stamped upon them all. Honor to General Bingham, who is to be credited with implanting this new spirit in

<sup>1</sup> See "The Roll of Honor of the New York Police," by Theodore Roosevelt, in *The Century Magazine*, October, 1897.

the police ! And honor again to the Mayor, who in spite of party pressure and partisan virulence has resolutely sustained the Commissioner of Police in his office and in his work !

The present police régime is decidedly of modern growth. True enough, there were police in the city from the early days, but they were constabulary in nature, and no doubt much mocked and little respected by the flippant and the ungodly in the community. A record of 1693, for instance, describes the policeman of that day as a gorgeous affair in livery, with shoes and stockings of municipal furnishing, and carrying a badge of "ye city arms." He must have been a target for the slings and arrows of the town, and that is about all. Even so recently as 1850 the police of the city were more like bailiffs than regulars. They wore no uniform, had a star-shaped badge pinned on their coat, and spent most of their time sitting on skids and barrels, or leaning against bars in the corner saloons. After the Draft Riots they became something of a power because moving as a body ; and after 1886, when they took a strong hand in the street-car strikes, they became a force to be feared. Since then they have steadily improved in numbers and in discipline, until to-day they have the standing of a small army. There are over nine thousand men on the force, well-officered, well-trained, well-seasoned. New York is very right in being proud of its police.

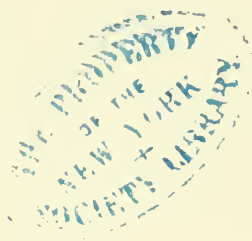
And also of its firemen. The Fire Department is, again, one of the most efficient in the world. It has become so through sheer necessity. There are ten fires in New York to one in London or Paris, and swiftness in extinguishing them is the result of having not only many to extinguish, but also of having the best modern machinery in the hands of men trained to utilize every possible fraction of time. All the fire-fighting men are athletic. This is required by the rigid examination antecedent to being enrolled in the department. Agility, catlike quickness, strength, are indispensable qualities. Practice does the rest. The engines (now being superseded by the very successful high-pressure system<sup>1</sup>) are of the latest patterns, the water towers are the highest, the hook-and-ladder extensions the longest obtainable. Electricity, of course, sends in the alarms, rings the gongs, lights the fires in the engines, un-snaps the horses. Everything is done with electric speed. That there may be no precious minute lost in sending in an alarm, there are hundreds of boxes placed in private buildings so that in case of fire it is only necessary to pull down a hook, and an engine will be there in perhaps two minutes.

<sup>1</sup> The High Pressure or Salt Water Service, by which name it is popularly known, has been in most successful operation since July, 1908. "It is capable of pumping at the rate of fifty million gallons of water in twenty-four hours, against a pressure of 350 pounds per square inch, and this enormous force against which no imaginable conflagration could stand, can be concentrated at any point within the High Pressure Fire District, and made available within two minutes after the alarm of fire is given." *Message of Hon. George B. McClellan, The Mayor, January 4, 1909.*





PL. 63. — BRIDGE OF SIGHS (TOMBS)





Nothing is answered so quickly as a fire call in an American city.

There are over four thousand men in the uniformed service of the New York Fire Department. In Manhattan and the Bronx alone there are eighty-four engine companies, standing ready night and day, men and horses alike, for the headlong rush to the fire. Just as ready are the thirty-five hook-and-ladder companies with their extension and sealing ladders. They never know what the need or what frightful risk will be asked of them, but they go prepared for anything. Along the rivers there are fire-boats stationed at different piers — boats that look like monitors with brass-nozzled hose mounted like rapid-fire guns — standing ready again, night and day, for the instant dash up or down the stream to put out dock or steamboat fires. The handling of an emergency with swiftness — swiftness above all things — is required of every one of them.

To maintain such an equipment, with its bureaus for extinguishing, for preventing, and for investigating fire, is, of course, a pretty item of expense. Seven and a half millions was in the budget for 1908 — quite enough to make one gasp at our extravagance. But the outlay is warranted by the circumstances. The fire losses in New York amount to some twelve million dollars a year, and the number of fires to something like ten thousand. The latter figure generally causes a stranger to throw up his

hands in horror or despair, and it has been known to give many a native a decided shock. It seems almost incredible that any city could average thirty fires a day, and still live to tell the tale. Yet New York has that record.

How does it happen? What the cause of these many outbreaks of fire? Whose the fault? It is said that our bad construction is to blame, that we build houses of wood that are little more than fire-traps — “tinder-boxes” is the more common term. It is said further that the buildings are easily ignited, that they go up swiftly “in puffs of smoke,” and that they shower sparks like shooting stars on all the neighboring buildings. Perhaps there is some truth in that, though there are few wooden buildings left in New York, and those built of brick and stone differ but little from similar structures in London or Paris. As for fire-proof structures, perhaps we are better off in respect of them than any other modern city. Having learned something from our experiences, and much desiring prevention to repetition, there has been a decided effort to construct buildings absolutely fire-proof. But, taking our buildings at their worst, it is not possible that they are ten times more inflammable than those of Europe. Yet we have ten times as many conflagrations. There is some other reason for so much smoke. How do the fires start in the first place? Perhaps the fire figures for the whole United States may help us out, or at least prove suggestive.

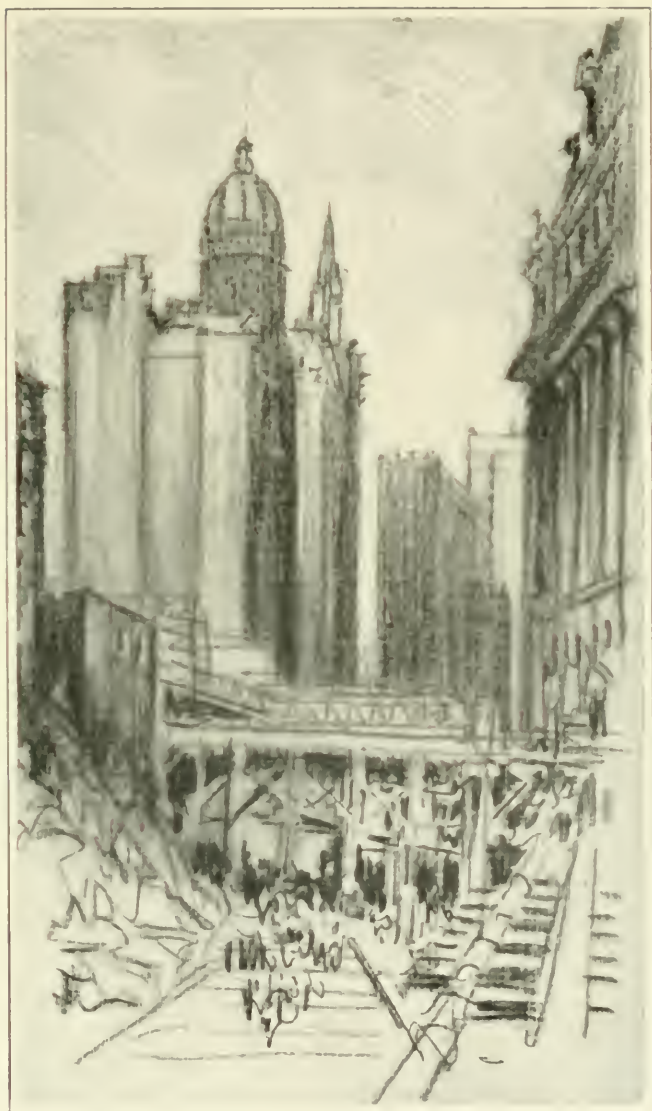
The destruction of life by fire in this country amounts to seven thousand people a year, the destruction of property amounts to two hundred millions a year; the fighting of fire, and the protection from it furnished by insurance companies, amounts to four hundred millions a year. This looks very much like waste caused by wanton carelessness. The disregard of consequences, the reckless attitude of mind, is, in fact, quite characteristic of the Americans, and is very speedily adopted by the immigrants who come here. By a queer system of economies a fire is usually regarded by irresponsible people as "a good thing," either because it gets rid of some undesirable building or because it "gives some poor man a job" in erecting a new structure. And in New York the majority of the fires are directly due to the irresponsibles.

Fifty per cent of the fires originate in the tenements. That in itself is significant. Those who have little or nothing to lose are generally easy in their minds about other people's losses. What difference does it make to them if they go out of an evening leaving a red-hot stove to take care of itself; or whether a festival candle is placed in a candle-stick or on a straw bed where it is almost sure to fall over and cause a conflagration? In any event they will not lose much. The landlord, whom they usually detest, will have to pay. The almost incredible tale is told that during a recent feast in one of

the East Side quarters nearly forty alarms of fire were sent in in a single afternoon. The carelessness suggested by such a story is simply astounding.

But New York is held responsible for the acts of its masses — foreign as well as native — and has to be prepared for the foolishness or the recklessness of its citizens. Hence the ever ready fire department, and hence the hurry and the speed of it. It is all loss, — money and effort thrown out to stop greater loss, — and perhaps the only phase of it that is at all compensating is the picturesque look and the heroic act. These are at times thrilling, ennobling, almost inspiring.

There is something in an alarm of fire — the clang of the gongs, the whistle of the engines, the clatter of horses' feet on the pavement, the rumble of the wheels — that gives one a thrill. People drop their work and crowd to the window or the door to see the engines go by. Everybody knows that hollow fire-whistle. The trucks and cabs crowd up to the curbs and stand still, the foot-passengers keep on the sidewalks, the street cars stop. A fire-engine always has the right of way. The horses as well as the drivers know that they are to have a clear track and, though they are prepared for unwieldy vehicles that occasionally block their path, they bowl along at great speed. It is a picturesque if common sight in the city, — this sweep through the streets of a flashing fire-engine, trailing a huge black streamer of smoke behind it,



PL. 64. — SITE OF THE NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
BOTANICAL GARDEN

whistling and clanging, its powerful horses galloping; and after it hose wagons, long hook-and-ladder trucks, with firemen perhaps hastily putting on rubber coats in preparation for action while moving toward the fire. The swiftness of it, the swirl of the huge trucks around the corners, the occasional skidding on the wet pavements, are exciting. Even the disappearance down an avenue or side street leaves behind a wonder in the air. Strangers turn to ask each other the whereabouts of the fire. Everyone is interested. No matter how familiar the sight, it always produces a thrill.

The excitement increases as one nears the fire itself. The police have perhaps already made a cordon around it, and have the curious pushed back out of the way. Engines on the side streets are spouting smoke, hose carriages are running out lengths of hose, ladders are going up against the walls, water towers are being elevated. There is water in a few minutes, pounding through the hose and playing on the flames, which are possibly already leaping high in air. Stream after stream is brought to bear from different sides, from neighboring houses, from the roof, or through the windows. There is the continual crash of glass, of falling floors, of crumbling walls, with the roar of the flames, the swish of water, the shouts of the mob and the men.

And always danger for the firemen. No one knows when or how it may develop. The pent-up gas within the



building may blow out the walls and bury a whole ladderful; the men may be overcome and suffocated by smoke, even though crawling along the floor for air and following the fire hose out; they may be caught in the dreaded back-draft and singed almost to a cinder before it passes. These are just the usual risks of the New York fireman and are accepted as a matter of course. But occasionally there arises for him a more direful emergency — the necessity of risking his life to save others. And here the fireman is not only a superb life-saver but frequently a self-sacrificing hero in the bargain.

Often enough, the man or woman at the window or on the roof top, cut off by the flames, appealing to be saved, is economically not worth the saving; often the crippled or the bed-ridden overlooked in the hurried flight and left behind in the house are, economically again, not worth risking young lives for; but no thought of that sort enters the fireman's mind. All alike are human to him and he must save them. Extension ladders go up, scaling ladders carry the men from story to story, window ledges and cornices are crept along, rooms black with smoke are traversed, the helpless are brought out and lowered to safety, and perhaps, as the walls fall in, the firemen drop into the safety-nets more dead than alive. It is a common story.

Still more wonderful are the rescues made by firemen of their companions. Perhaps the more adventurous have



been caught on the roof, or have been overcome by smoke in rooms, or have fallen with the collapse of a floor into the cellar, where, unconscious, they are drowning in pools of water. The tales told of these rescues — of human bridge building, of swinging from window to window, of creeping along lead pipes, of leaps for life — are almost unbelievable in their details.<sup>1</sup> The things that once took place only in romantic fiction are now and here being outdone in fact.

New York has good reason to be proud of its policemen and its firemen. There are no deeds of heroism more heroic than theirs; and yet, within the ranks, risk and danger are considered merely matters of service. Such service is not so common, however, that it escapes notice. Almost everyone is led to reflect at times upon the model municipality that New York might be were all the branches of its government as devoted to duty as the departments of Fire and Police.

<sup>1</sup> See "Heroes who Fight Fire," by Jacob Riis, in *The Century Magazine*, Vol. 55, p. 483.



## THE BRIDGES





PL. XVII. — HIGH BRIDGE, HARLEM RIVER









## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BRIDGES

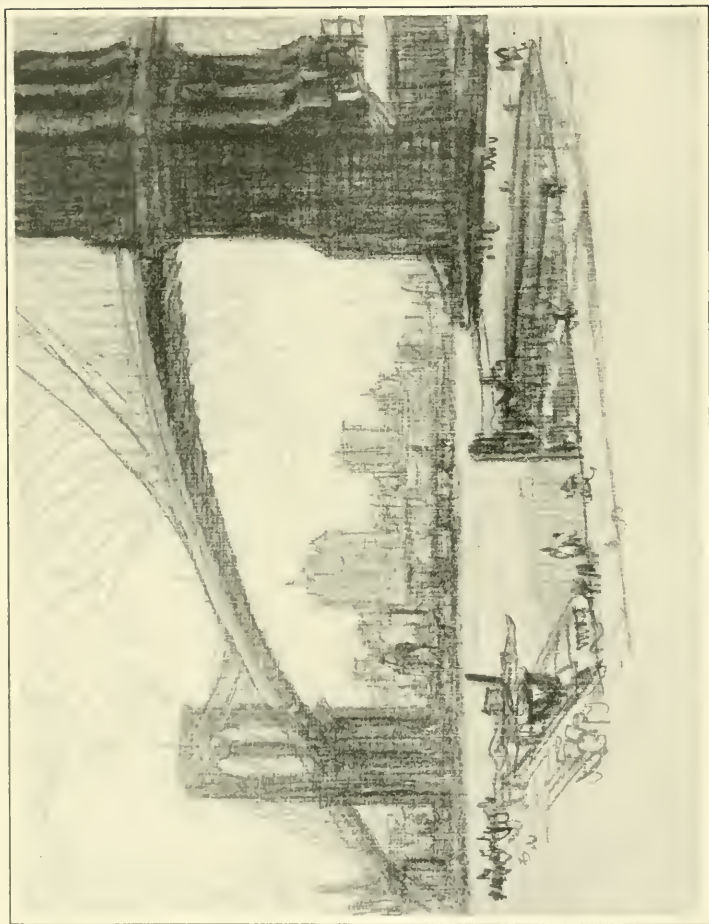
WHEREVER a crowd gathers, whether about a fight or a fire, a rescue or an accident, there you will find the blue-coated policeman. He is usually at the focal point of interest, wherever and whatever that may be. He has to uphold and preserve the majesty of the law; and, incidentally, he has to make the crowd "move on" or "stand back." This he usually succeeds in doing without force or display of any kind. Of course, if word is passed along the line to "clear the square," at an open-air meeting of the Reds, for instance, he and his companions do it very expeditiously and conclusively. His force is a persuasive one. And the mob, whether guilty or innocent of any misdemeanor, knows enough to keep out of the way of his locust stick. It is a very hard club. The end of it thrust into a running back is quite as effective as the length of it laid on a stubborn head.

And what crowds to cope with there are in New York! The city seems always alive with people. On New Year's nights the sidewalks overflow into the streets, and the great thoroughfares like Broadway turn into torrents of shouting,

horn-blowing, confetti-throwing people. On Easter Day or Labor Day or the Fourth of July there is a similar emptying of the houses into the streets. People are always willing to go out "to see something," and when out they are easily drawn into and help swell a crowd. Everyone knows how they gather from all points of the compass in a public square to hear some agitator or politician speaking from a cart tail, or how they flock to "the game" at the Polo Grounds, thirty thousand or more, and spend half a day perched contentedly on benches, banks, bridges, and distant housetops.

The largest gatherings are seen only at political or military parades or at some important public function. The Dewey Celebration and its like, the processions preceding national elections, even the fire and police parades, bring out vast numbers of spectators. The people of the East and West Sides come flocking through the side streets to Fifth Avenue, where they occupy the stoops, climb railings, windows, trees, lamp-posts, to get a sight of what is moving. The processions themselves are often enormous aggregations of individuals. In December, 1905, there was a Jewish parade (a protest against the massacres of Jews in Russia) that is said to have contained 125,000 people. It took the better part of the day in passing a given point. Such crowds are hardly to be imagined. And when seen, the wonder is where the people come from, and how they are housed and fed.

1877  
JAN 10  
1877



PL. 65.—BROOKLYN BRIDGE

If one is whimsically inclined, he may even wonder as to who made all the thousands of Derby hats that are everywhere in sight. Seen from a window or a balcony of a sky-scraper the whole avenue looks paved with black hats.

But even on days and nights devoid of holiday significance the streets are full of people. There are certain places that are always congested. These are the main-traveled thoroughfares, the principal avenues, the larger cross-streets, the railway stations, the subway and ferry entrances, — above all, the bridge entrances. The number of people that daily pass between Manhattan and Long Island by the bridges is something extraordinary. There are nearly 5000 trolley cars a day moving on the Brooklyn Bridge alone, and they are generally “full up” with passengers. A moderate estimate gives 200,000 people a day passing over this bridge, and in 1907 it ran for a single day as high as 423,000 people. The Williamsburgh Bridge, formally opened last year, though used since 1903, accommodates over 200,000 a day; while the Queensboro, opened this year (1909), with a capacity of several hundred thousand, and the Manhattan, now being finished, with an estimated capacity of over half a million a day, give an idea of the city's present needs. A million people a day moving across the East River bridges is perhaps a maximum estimate, but not an extravagant one. No wonder the bridges were built of colossal proportions.

Our foreign friends who smile at our love of “big-

ness" as exemplified in bridges and buildings, fail to take into consideration the actual demand, the necessity of the hour. They know nothing about bridge "jams," and a million people a day moving across a wide and swift river has little meaning for them. As for bridges themselves they know the common types such as London Bridge and the Pont Neuf. These being sufficiently large and serviceable in their places, the conclusion is perhaps reached that they would be equally serviceable anywhere else on the globe. The measuring of the world by a local yardstick is a very common failing of humanity, and one that accounts for many mistakes. Neither the Pont Neuf nor London Bridge would reach halfway across the East River. By comparison with what is needed in New York, and what now exists, they are merely enlarged culverts. They could hardly accommodate the Brooklyn crowd that goes on foot, to say nothing of the teams, trolleys, and electric cars. The East River bridges are none too large, yet they are the largest in the world. No other city has one bridge of this scale, where New York has four and will soon have more.

This being merely a fact and not a boast, why should we not state it whenever necessary? Of course, we do talk unnecessarily and unceasingly about our "big" things, even when they have no quality and mean nothing but a row of figures; yet there are things of magnitude and worth in the United States that cannot be understood

unless we deal in figures. For instance, the Canyon of the Colorado is a slash in the earth over a mile deep, thirteen miles in width, several hundred miles in length; and the slash is filled with the most beautiful air and color ever seen anywhere in the world. Why should we not tell the tale with those figures and with the superlative adjective? How could it be told differently? Just so with the stupendous volume of Niagara, the great body of the fresh-water lakes, the vast prairies, the huge trees, the giant forests. The very "bigness" of these things is perhaps their telling quality. It gives them distinction, grandeur, even sublimity. To talk about them with a mock-modest air, as though giant redwoods grew on every hillside, and Niagaras roared in every river, and Colorado canyons were after all very common affairs, would be absurd. They are world wonders, and why should we not say as much without either pride or humility?

It is precisely so with the four bridges across the East River. Their "bigness" is not only a necessity, but it is also their commanding feature. Mere bulk, length, weight, and height give them grandeur. No one who goes across them, or sees them from the river, or studies them from some Manhattan sky-scraper, can fail to be impressed by them. Yet even then, with the mind expanded and grown colossal by contemplation, the true measure of them is perhaps not appreciated.

The earliest one, the Brooklyn Bridge, was opened for



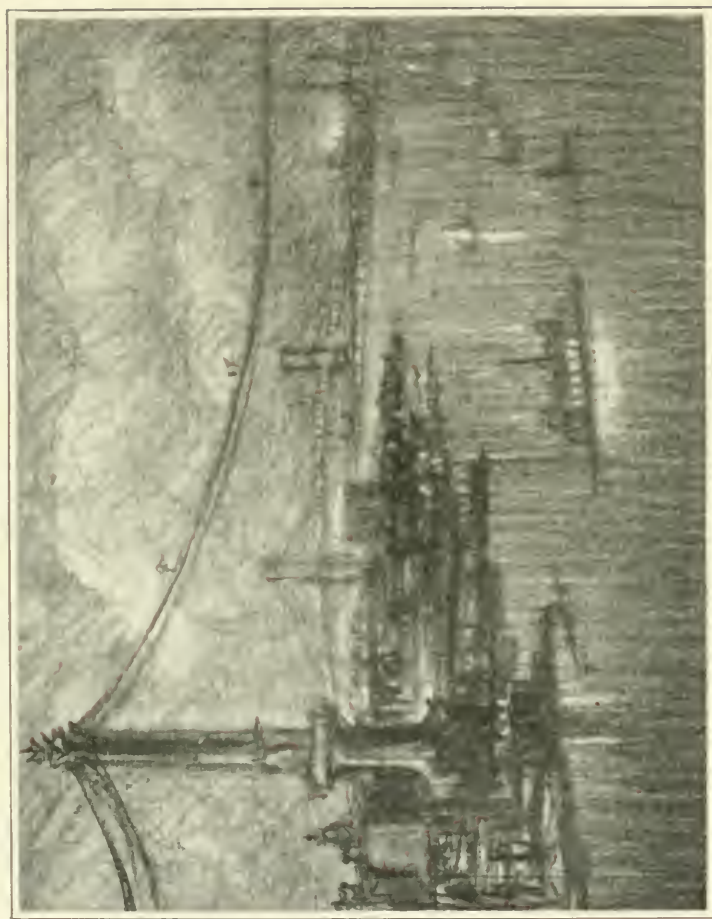
traffic in 1883, and since then upwards of fifty million people a year have continuously passed over it in cars alone. It is one of the most famous of the suspension bridges, with stone towers 272 feet in height, a central span of 1595 feet, and a lift above the water of 135 feet. Its total length is 5989 feet, something over a mile. It has promenades for foot-passengers, two roadways for vehicles, and two railway tracks for electric cars.

Enormous as this bridge was when first built, and spectacular as it still appears, it is outdone in size by the Williamsburgh Bridge, sometimes called "Bridge No. 2." This is another suspension affair, but of quite a different appearance from the first bridge. It has steel towers 325 feet in height, a central span of 1600 feet, and a total length of 7200 feet. Since its opening it has carried immense crowds. When the cars for it are in running order they will transport 200,000 people a day and in emergencies 125,000 people an hour. In its 118 feet of width it has four surface railway tracks, two elevated tracks, two carriage ways, two promenades, and two bicycle paths.

Yet this bridge is once more surpassed in size by the Queensboro or Blackwell's Island Bridge. It is a cantilever of peculiar design and is regarded as an experiment by some and as an unsafe structure by others.<sup>1</sup> It has

<sup>1</sup> Expert engineers have reported that it will not carry more than about half the load contemplated, that the superstructure of it weighs twenty-five per cent more than it should, and that it will cost twenty-five per cent more than was bargained for. In many ways it seems the bridge is not the success that was anticipated.





PL. 66. — MANHATTAN BRIDGE (IN CONSTRUCTION)

PROPERTY  
OF THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
CONGRESS  
1876

four trolley tracks, two elevated railway tracks, besides footpaths and carriage ways, and its capacity is 125,000 passengers an hour. It crosses the East River between Fifty-Ninth Street and Long Island City in three spans, resting on Blackwell's Island after the first one, and making a short span across the island itself. There are six rather fine masonry piers, two on the island and two on each river bank. The total reach of the bridge is 7636 feet. The distinction of being the largest cantilever in the world (the Forth Bridge has a longer single span) is perhaps needed to sustain an interest, for it certainly is not beautiful. It seems cumbrous and unnecessarily heavy.

In sheer weight, however, as in carrying capacity, this Queensboro cantilever is exceeded by "Bridge No. 3," or the Manhattan Bridge, now nearly completed. It is between the Brooklyn and the Williamsburgh bridges, and like them is suspended on enormous ropes of steel. Each rope consists of 9472 wires,  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch in diameter, woven into thirty-seven strands, with an outside diameter of  $21\frac{1}{4}$  inches. These cables are swung from steel towers standing upon granite and concrete foundations that go down to bed-rock 100 feet below the mean surface of the water. The towers are 345 feet in height, the steel in each of them weighs some 6250 tons, and each carries a load of 32,000 tons. The anchorage on either shore to which the ends of the cables are made fast is another mass of granite and concrete, weighing something like 232,000

tons. It is calculated to resist a pull of, say, 30,000 tons. From the main cables, carried by smaller suspender cables, is the superstructure, which in weight of nickel-steel, including the towers, amounts to 42,000 tons. In the main span over the river there is 10,000 tons, and in each shore span 5000 tons.

These figures suggest a bridge of not only great weight, but of huge size. It is planned to be the strongest and possibly the longest bridge in the world. And this not because New York wants to have the "biggest" structure in all creation, paying ten or more millions for that pretentious distinction, but because it needs a bridge that will carry from 300,000 to 500,000 people a day, and carry most of them during the "rush" hours.<sup>1</sup> It is built to stand great strain and to accommodate any crowd, however large. To that end there are to be four tracks for elevated and subway cars, accommodating trains of eight and ten cars each, four more tracks for trolleys and surface cars on a second floor, besides a roadway thirty-five feet wide and two twelve-foot sidewalks for pedestrians. The main span of the bridge is not so long as those of the Brooklyn and Williamsburgh bridges, being 1470 feet to their 1600; but the approach from the Manhattan side is 1940 feet and from the Brooklyn side 4230 feet. This makes a total length of 9090 feet, nearly two miles.

<sup>1</sup> The maximum carrying capacity is given as 350,000 people an hour — 175,000 each way.

That figure, taken in connection with its width of 120 feet (35 feet wider than the Brooklyn Bridge), gives perhaps some idea of this stupendous structure of steel swung across the East River as easily and as lightly as a spider's web across a doorway.

For, notwithstanding its weight and mass, this bridge does not look heavy. Apparently it has no rigidity about it. It looks as though it might ride out a storm by bending before it or swaying with it. Its grace and its feeling of elasticity come from its fine bending lines. The city planned for the beauty of the structure as well as for its usefulness. Mr. Hastings, the architect, has personally had its decoration on his hands and conscience for a long time. No doubt this has meant much in matters of detail. The main beauty of the bridge, however, lies in its lines — the graceful droop of its cables over its upright towers.

The Brooklyn Bridge also has this grace of line and delicate tracery against the sky. The towers are well-proportioned masses of masonry, but when built they were denounced by many for their pike-staff plainness. They were thought "ugly" because not ornamented with mouldings, or divided up by stringcourses of protruding stone. In fact, the whole bridge was considered something of a monstrosity, and spoken of at that time very much as our sky-scrapers are scoffed at to-day. But, fortunately, the bridge has existed long enough to win over many of those

who thought it monstrous; and the newer generation has come to regard it as one of the city's most beautiful features. It has grown gray in service, having been used twenty-five years; and is now spoken of as "the old Bridge." Perhaps some of its attractiveness has come with age, and then, perhaps again, it was just as beautiful the day it was completed, and we have merely grown up to it.

We shall fit ourselves quickly to the Manhattan Bridge, in fact, we have done so already; but shall we ever come to think the Williamsburgh Bridge so graceful as the two lower ones on the river? Its cables fall in curves, but they seem not free, flowing lines. There is no illusion of swaying movement about it, no delicate tracery against the sky. Instead there is the feeling of uncompromising rigidity. The steel towers look not unlike oil derricks; and the superstructure suggests cast-iron rather than finely spun smooth-wrought steel. Possibly the angular lattice work of cross-braces has something to do with this stiffness. Wherever the fault may lie the bridge can hardly be considered a great artistic effort. It is just a useful bridge, — no more.

And what can one say in good report of the Queensboro Bridge? It is a ponderous affair of vertical eye-bars and girders that look like enormous fence palings linked together, and the marvel is how it manages to maintain itself in air. One wonders if it is not likely at any time to shut up like a jumping-jack, or fall down like a house

built of matches. The feeling of a self-sustaining structure, such as the other bridges possess, is absent; and one grows perhaps unduly critical over the choice of such a pattern with the successful models of the others so close at hand. When it is properly painted, it may appear to better advantage; and yet it is difficult to see how the disagreeable cross-lines of its superstructure can ever be smoothed away or painted out.

The æsthetic quality of these huge bridges, it would seem, must derive almost wholly from their form. How could ornamental sculpture be used upon them, for instance? The approaches to the Pont Alexandre have carved pedestals and groups of figures that are commanding and appropriate, because the bridge is not of a size to dwarf them; but such or similar work would appear lost at the approaches to any of the East River bridges. One has merely to stand at the entrance to the Queensboro Bridge and look up at it to realize that sculptural ornamentation in connection with it would be only so much labor in vain. It would not be seen for the bigness of the bridge itself. If made of a size to scale with the bridge it would probably be grandiose, like the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island, or monstrous, like the huge marbles of the Italian Decadence. Besides, you cannot make an ugly mantel-piece look handsome by placing statuettes and bronzes upon it. The mantel (and the bridge) requires correct proportions.

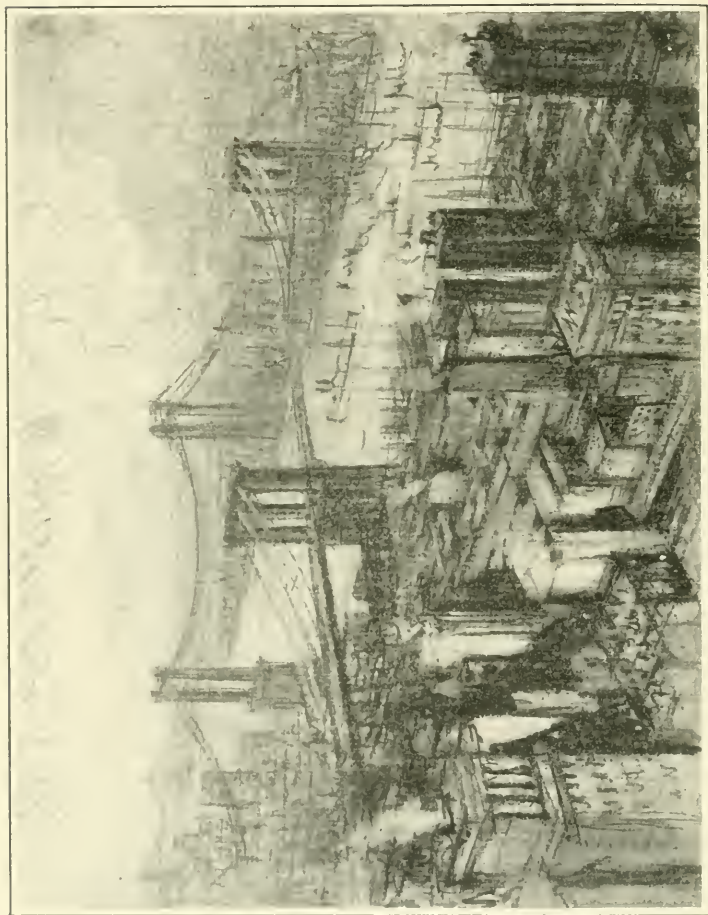


And what could one do with decorative patterns upon such bridges? Make the pattern of a size corresponding to the structure itself, and like the sculpture, it becomes bizarre; make it small, and, again, it is ineffective. A fine moulding, a sculptured band, a classic design in steel or stone, what could you see of it at the distance of a mile? And a mile or more away is the proper distance to look at one of these bridges. From underneath you can grasp nothing but the immense mass of the structure; on the bridge itself you can see little but lifting towers, drooping cables, climbing girders. You must get far enough away — on another bridge or on a sky-scraper — to see the whole bridge at a glance, to get the *ensemble*. With such necessary distance in between you and the object of vision, what becomes of sculptured groups or decorative patterns? They fade out, blur out, and are wholly wanting in carrying power.

One comes back to insist that good form is absolutely needful in these colossal bridges if beauty is to be a part of them. It is a matter, too, of outline beauty, of the traced form against the sky. It is in just this respect that the two lower bridges on the river are so satisfactory, and the two upper ones are so faulty. It is the sweep of the long bending lines from tower to tower, so grateful to the eye, that pleases us in the one; it is the sharp interruption of angle lines, so irritating to the eye, that displeases us in the other. And yet it is possible that







PL. 67. — EAST RIVER BRIDGES

the good form of the first two might be enhanced, and the harsh form of the second two disguised, or at least minimized, by still another feature. I mean color.

From time out of mind, humanity seems to have associated a bridge with a road, and put down the one as being as dirty and as dusty as the other. Perhaps that is why bridges (especially if of iron or steel) have always been painted a black, or gray, or drab, or dust color. But why should this tradition continue with structures that are high in air, above the dust and dirt, over wide wind-swept rivers? The painting of a battleship a mouldy slate color in preparation for war, we can understand is a necessary disguise; but what a delightful change when the war is over and the ship returns to her peace garment of white with buff funnels! One wonders if a similar change could not be wrought in the huge East River bridges by painting them in less dismal colors. Variegated hues would probably not prove satisfactory, and not even patriotism could countenance an "arrangement" in red, white, and blue; but a single color, like buff or rose or mauve, might add to the picturesque, and possibly the architectural, appearance of the structures.

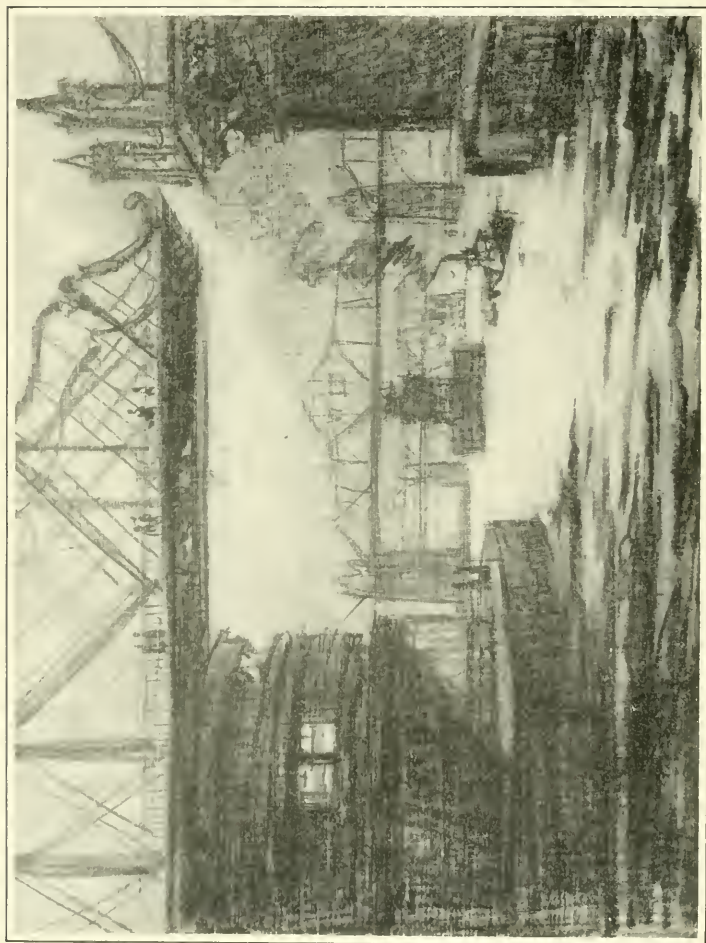
In one respect, at least, the bridges are quite right as they stand. They are in proper scale with the new city. Their approaches now reach down into streets where stand buildings of four and five stories, looking singularly mean and small by comparison; but the small

buildings are coming down one by one, and will eventually be replaced by newer and higher ones which the size of the bridges anticipates. The Brooklyn Bridge in the lower city, brought into close contact with the down-town sky-scrapers, demonstrates the rightness of its proportions. The Singer, the Terminal, the Metropolitan Life, the Flatiron, the Times buildings, all belong in scale with the East River structures. The new bridge planned to span the Hudson is to be of the same colossal character.

To feel the justness and the appropriateness of these huge river-spans one should go up to the Harlem, at the north of the city, and look at the dozen or more of small bridges for streets and railways that are placed there. They seem to belong to another city, an earlier age, and are grade-crossings, so to speak — little bridges twenty or forty feet above the water, with neither form, weight, nor color to distinguish them or dignify them. They are only waiting to be pulled down, to be superseded by loftier and wider structures. The pattern of the Harlem bridge of the future was already in place on the river in 1889, in the Washington Bridge with its fine arches spanning 510 feet each, its 135 feet of height, and its 2400 feet of length. It fits the Harlem River as the Manhattan Bridge the East River, and is a beautiful structure in every way.

Even High Bridge rather anticipated the sky-scraper.





PL. 68. — BRIDGES ON THE HARLEM

It carries the Croton aqueduct across the Harlem at One Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Street, is 116 feet above the river, and has thirteen arches resting on solid granite piers. In connection with the smooth water, the winding driveway near by, and the river banks covered with foliage, this bridge with its repeated arches makes a very effective picture. It seems to remind one of something out of Turner's sketches, or of bridges we have seen on the Rhine or the Seine. The whole view of bridge and river and shore is a sharp contrast to the East River spans, with the agitated tide-water under them, and the tugs and ferries forever in motion,—another one of those contrasts so frequently met with in New York. No modern city quite equals it in glaring inconsistencies; but let us say also that no city quite reaches up to it in varied phases of beauty.





## THE WATER-WAYS



PL. XVIII. - NEAR THE BATTERY

Y. S. CHEN, J. H. CHEN, Q. B. CHEN, H. L. CHEN, H. L. CHEN





## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE WATER-WAYS

IT is matter of common geographic knowledge that the borough of Manhattan is surrounded by water; that the water is furnished by the Hudson, the Harlem, and the East rivers; and that these same rivers also make channels through the Upper and Lower bays to the sea. Three rivers would seem to be a sufficiently large endowment for one city — at least the claim is large enough, especially as two of them are not rivers at all — but, for once, it appears we have not claimed enough. A former mayor of the city<sup>1</sup> assures us that there are thirteen rivers emptying into New York Bay, not including the Croton that comes to us through the water mains; and, of course, they all belong to the city, or at any rate help on its commercial importance in one way or another.

The figure, however, is somewhat unfortunate because it requires such a stretch of the imagination to realize it. Presumably the Hackensack, the Passaic, and the Raritan are included in the thirteen; but New Jersey would certainly object to New York claiming them, even though

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Seth Low at Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg, 1904.

their waters do flow seaward past Sandy Hook — a New Jersey sand spit, by the way. Presumably, again, the Bronx and the East Chester, with Newtown and Flushing creeks, and some of the creeks flowing into Jamaica Bay, are on the list. They are, however, rivers only by courtesy. The citizens who live near them, and the watermen who navigate them, no doubt enjoy the larger designation; but the titles are not to be taken seriously — except when a proud New Yorker goes forth to make a speech to the people of an inland city. Commercially, the creeks do not “launch a thousand ships,” nor anywhere near that number. They are still in the creek stage of commerce as of water. New York really has only one river, but that one is “the lordly Hudson,” — a sufficient waterway for any city, however large.

The East River is merely a tide-arm connecting New York Bay with Long Island Sound, but it flows between Manhattan and Brooklyn and is a very important waterway. Perhaps it is the most-traveled stretch of water for its length and breadth that the city possesses. It is usually supposed to begin where the Harlem River comes out; but, legally, it has been decided that it starts near Throggs Neck, some ten miles farther up, where the tide-waters of Bay and Sound meet. It practically ends at the Battery twenty miles below. There, at ebb tide, it goes bumping into Governor’s Island, and is shunted around the western end of the island into the waters of



the Upper Bay. A small part of it passes through Buttermilk Channel — a narrow reach of water between the island and lower Brooklyn, through which came small boats loaded with Long Island buttermilk in the ancient days, and across which the cattle used to wade at low tide.

From start to finish the East River is a rapid stream. Even down near Wall Street or South Ferry, it goes by with a twisting, swirling current that makes the tugs wheeze and snort in pushing a ship or schooner into dock. The ferry-boats to Brooklyn that still ply backward and forward (more from force of habit than as a paying industry since the tunnels have been opened) have their worries with this same current, heading up well against it, coming into the slip diagonally, and often with a heavy jar against the pilings. When wind and tide are dead ahead there is a great deal of effort on the part of craft for little progress. The surface is hardly ever smooth except at flood tide. Little eddies and tide-rips, with geyser-like currents that occasionally seem to boil up from below, are frequent. Besides, there is the night-and-day churn of tugs and wash of steamers, with rolling swells that swash against the pier heads, rush through the pilings, and keep the little craft within the slips, pitching, rolling, dancing.

Under the Brooklyn Bridge as one looks down on the surface there is the same uneasy flashing water. And it is darker in hue than that which flows in the Hudson.

Presumably, this is due to the greater admixture of salt water coming, more or less directly, from the sea or the Sound. Salt water is always deeper in tone than that which is fresh or merely brackish. And yet the East River is not a sea-blue or a sea-green, except in the wake of a steamer. From the bridges looking straight down one gets its local hue in a dark slate or olive color, with sometimes a blue-steel hue, something more like the water of the Black Sea than that of the near-by Sound. The Hudson, too, has a deep tone to it under certain lights; but with full sunlight there is in it a pronounced jade-color — an indefinable gray-green peculiar to harbor waters that are half fresh and half salt.

Above the Manhattan Bridge at Wallabout Bay<sup>1</sup> there is a sharp turn of the river as though the stream had tried for a passage-way through at that point, and had finally given up in disgust, pitching off to the southwest on another tack. At Blackwell's Island it is split in two and the divided waters pass on either side, the main-traveled channel being along the Manhattan shore. Farther up at Hell Gate comes a clash and a turmoil, for here the river makes a quick bend with Ward's Island, Astoria, and Manhattan all pushing it different ways. It was considered a dangerous place for navigators previous to

<sup>1</sup> The name is Dutch and refers to the bend in the river. The Wallboons are said to have settled there in 1624. Afterwards the Bay held the British prison-ships, as to-day the lower end of it the ships of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

the blasting operations of 1876. Certain projecting rocks in the channel made eddies and counter-currents that often proved disastrous to small craft. There were further blastings at Flood Rock in 1885; but though the channel is now comparatively free of ledges there is still an angry twist and boil of the elements thereabouts. It is the meeting-place of several waters, and a struggle for right of way is the natural consequence.

Here, where the Harlem joins and Little Hell Gate, above Ward's Island, cuts through, would seem to be the beginning (or the ending) of the East River. Just above there is a widening of the channel preparatory to the river's disappearance in the Sound itself, and many islands — Randall's, Riker's, and North and South Brother — appear. It is quite apparent that this is really a bay of the Sound and not a part of the narrow strait. Beyond Throggs Neck and Willetts Point, however, there is no possible room for further doubt. The limits of New York City are left behind and the Sound is ahead — the Sound where the great passenger boats go whistling hoarsely through the fog up to Fall River, where the yachts go cruising, and the coasting schooners come laden, and the brave winds blow, blow high, blow low, from Pelham Bay to Newfoundland Banks.

The Harlem, which comes out at Hell Gate, is a very tame affair after the deep swift water of the East River. It is a small mouth of the Hudson and is not unlike some

placid little country stream — shallow in places, slow of motion, low of shore, and somewhat dirty of hue. It does not boil or seethe. Usually its surface is flat and reflects very beautifully the evening skies over Fort George. No large sailing craft infest it, no ocean liners churn up its mud, no long docks push out from its shores. In their place one finds a superabundance of small piers and docks, with oyster boats, fishing smacks, catboats, and many boat-houses that are headquarters for rowing clubs. It is a famous stream for small craft to anchor in or dry-dock, and also a stream where the artist in search of the small picturesque finds ready material.

There is substantial traffic on the Harlem, too (in the aggregate it is considerable); but it is not precisely representative of New York commerce. It is the old New York we see there, not the new; and the general impression one gains is that the locality has not kept pace with other portions of the island. New York, like every other advancing city, pushes its small buildings, factories, and bridges ahead of it. Just at present they seem to be enjoying a momentary rest on the banks of the Harlem. Eventually they will be pushed over the stream or demolished to make room for larger things. As for the stream itself, it is only a bogus little river, though it may some day, by dredging, become a great thoroughfare.

But the river of which New York is the proudest is the Hudson. What a stream it must have been when

the *Half Moon* first dropped anchor in its waters! Its discoverer found it so broad — this Groot Riviere — that he could not but believe it the long-sought passage-way to the Indies. He followed it to Troy before he was convinced that it was only a river of the New World. In those days the primeval forests grew down to the water's edge even on the island of Manhattan; the Catskills and the Adirondacks were true enough wildernesses, and the Indian routes to the north were chiefly by the water-ways. Perhaps the rainfall in the summer and the snowfall in the winter were greater: perhaps they were held longer under the mosses and the shadows of the vast forests, and the stage of water in the tributary streams was more evenly maintained. In consequence the river was, no doubt, wider and deeper then than now, and its waters moved more calmly, without sound or breaking rapids, in a mighty flood, from the mountains to the sea. What a majestic river it must have been!

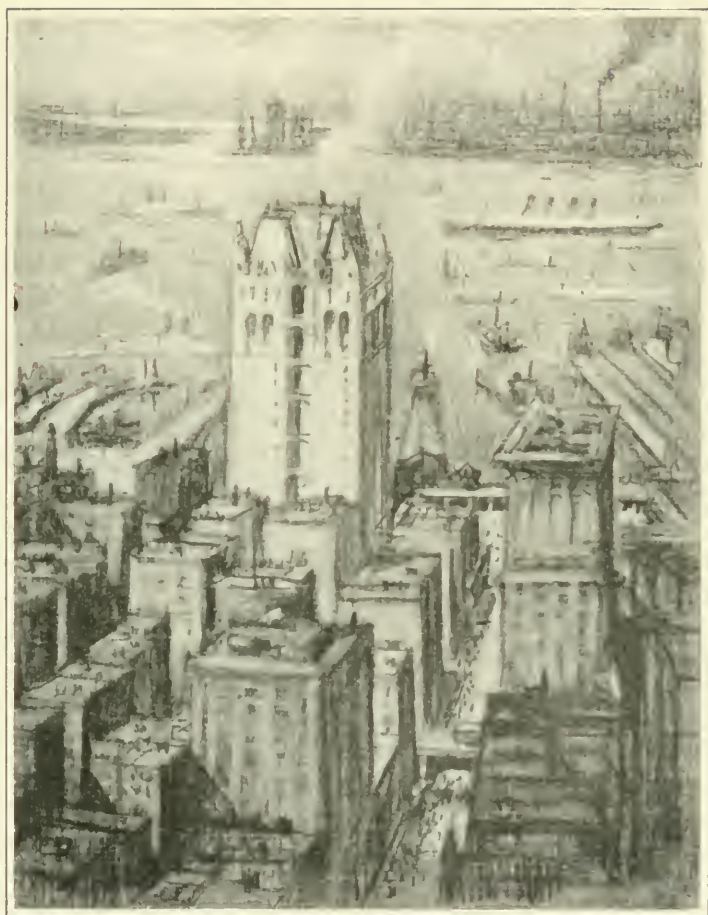
And how crystal clear the waters! In that early time there were no lands broken by the plough to muddy the small streams, there were no huge water-sheds of charred timber-stumpage and denuded ground to darken the brooks and discolor the lakes, there were no towns or cities to drain into the river or pollute it with factories or litter it with street refuse. Not even commerce stirred its silts or washed its shores. Its waters were "unvexed by any keel," its banks were unslashed by railways, its

mountain walls were unblasted by quarrymen. Nature, not commerce, reigned; and the river belonged as wholly and completely to the former then as to the latter now. What a marvel of purity it must have been! What a splendid sweep of translucent waters!

It is still a majestic river. At ebb tide, deep and strong and nearly as wide again as the East River, it comes down by the Palisades, down by the Riverside Drive, down by the city wharfs and docks, an unconquered, uncontrolled force. What sublimity in its volume! What dignity in its measured movement! Without twist or turn into indentation or bayou it moves serenely on. In the Upper Bay much of it spreads out and is disintegrated by the tides. It loses its riverine character; it becomes a part of the Bay and eventually floods out through the Narrows, through the Main, the Swash, and the Ambrose channels, out to the distant ocean.

What philosopher or theologian was it that discovered a special providence in every great city being furnished with a great river at its doorstep for a water supply? If we allow this amusing exchange of place in the proverbial cart-and-horse, we may conclude that New York was, indeed, fortunate in its Hudson. And, since civilization and commerce were destined to follow the discovery of the New World, possibly the Hudson was fortunate in its New York. The less philosophical and the more sceptical may, however, see in the conjunction something





PL. 69.—THE LOWER HUDSON FROM SINGER TOWER

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
LIBRARY



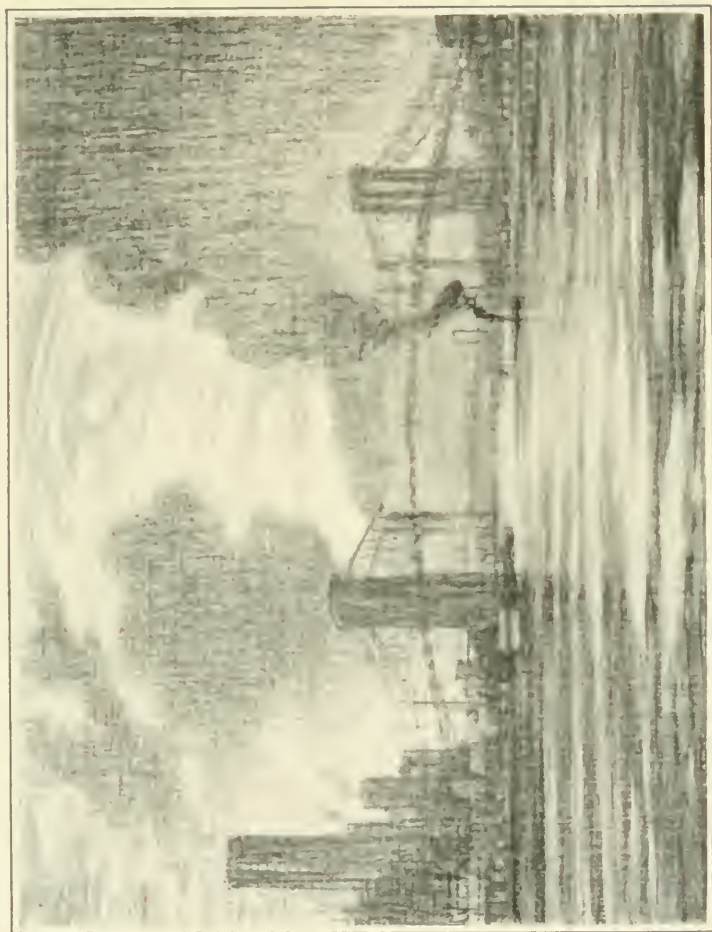
that inevitably "happened." Such a river and harbor were destined to have just such a city. Both river and city are alike in scale; and, in some respects, not unlike in nature. The breadth and the length of the one are the height and the reach of the other. The very swirl of the stream, and the worry of the waters about docks and piers and bridges, seem to repeat the fret of the street and the uneasy movement of its long lines of people. And again, the ceaseless come and go of current and tide, with all the power and the push of them, are once more suggested in the energy of the city that never rests save for the momentary lull betwixt ebb and flow. They complement each other — the river and the town.

The city is more fortunate in its water-ways than perhaps many of us imagine. Of course, its commercial up-building has derived from its harbor, but how many of us realize that much of its beauty and grandeur come from the surrounding waters? I mean now not only that picturesque beauty that derives from sea hazes and mists, from water-reflections upon wall and tower, with that wonderful blend of color known only to island cities; but the imposing appearance of the city as a whole, as you approach it from the water. If the city were flung down upon a flat piece of ground and the only approach to it were by railway, how much of an impression would it make? And who would marvel over the line or light or color of the down-town mountain ridge? If our foreign

acquaintance came to the city by way of Harlem and the Bronx, rather than by Sandy Hook, would they be shocked or grieved or astonished or delighted at the first appearance of the city? The water approach to New York is more than a commercial asset: it is a superb avenue leading up to the temple.

It is not possible to reach Manhattan without crossing water — either above it or below it. This is, no doubt, something of a bother and a nuisance to the commuter or the business man. He is always in a hurry to “get down to the office,” and ferries and bridges take up too much of his time. He much prefers the tunnels under the rivers. The electric cars go through the tubes with a rush, and, though he sees nothing but the glitter of passing lights, he gazes steadily ahead of him and thinks about business, knowing very well that he will “get there” in a few minutes. Such an approach is certainly practical and convenient, but just as certainly not pleasurable. Yet no one need lament the coming of the tunnels. They will supersede the ferries; but the bridges will remain. The approach from the west may not in the future be made by boats, but the great bridge, now planned for the Hudson, will be followed by others, and the view from them two hundred feet in air will be even more imposing.

It is so now. What more astonishing approach could one ask than that from the Brooklyn Bridge? The outlook to any and every point of the compass is wide



PL. 70. — THE EAST RIVER

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

and wonderful. Up the river it reaches to the Sound with bridges and boats and towers and tall chimneys all swimming in a purple-blue haze. Down the river you overlook the Battery and Governor's Island, to the Upper Bay, to the water-ways leading out by the Narrows, and in the distance lost in mist, Staten Island. Around to the northwest your eyes follow the Hudson with the Palisades beyond; and against them, in partial silhouette, are seen the towers and tall buildings of upper New York.

It is usually at the city, however, that the man on the bridge looks. He watches the line of sky-scrapers grow from day to day; he sees the plying steamers beneath him, the new work on the docks, the moving lines of trucks along the wharves, the peopled decks of the ferry-boats. The human interest is his. The hum of the hive over there where the high buildings cluster the closest comes to him with a strange lure. He is drawn toward it irresistibly. The zeal of his business hath eaten him up.

Yet he is not indifferent to the broader outlook. Ask him questions and you will find that he has seen the stupendous beauty of the lower water-ways set with green islands under sunset skies. He has seen many times the long sweep of the rivers by the rounded shores, and the far glitter of the Upper Bay flecked with steamers, sails, and hurrying tugs. He knows the graceful lines of the new suspension bridge, the charm of the morning light

striking upon the white walls of the Metropolitan tower, the wonderful shadows cast by the high buildings of the lower city in the evening light. He may even see some color charm in the advertisements that roof the tenements of the East Side. Perhaps he is more impressed by the "bigness" of city, land, and sea, than by small patches of beauty in the scene; but then who is not? Who can fail of being awed by such vast proportions? The man on the bridge is not so sadly out of focus. He appreciates what he sees and, poor mean money-grubber that we may contemptuously think him, he may even nurse dreams of the running water and the splendid ship that will some day bear him out to Europe or Far Cathay, away from business and "the Street," away from the hum of the hive, away from the worry of the money-world.

Just so with the commuter from New Jersey who is rushed through the tube in the morning but, perhaps, returns home by the ferry at night. He can spare more time in the evening and possibly goes down the river from Twenty-Third Street or up the river to the Erie or West Shore railroad station. The ride is restful, and he likes to sit out on the deck and see the distant city in the sunset light with the window-panes of the skyscrapers flashing fire, and the high walls suffused with pink and rose and lilac. He has seen it many times before, but it is always interesting. It is his city, and he is proud of it at heart, though he sometimes speaks slight-

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
LIBRARY



PL. 71.—THE LOWER EAST RIVER

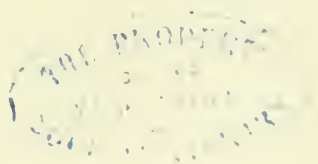


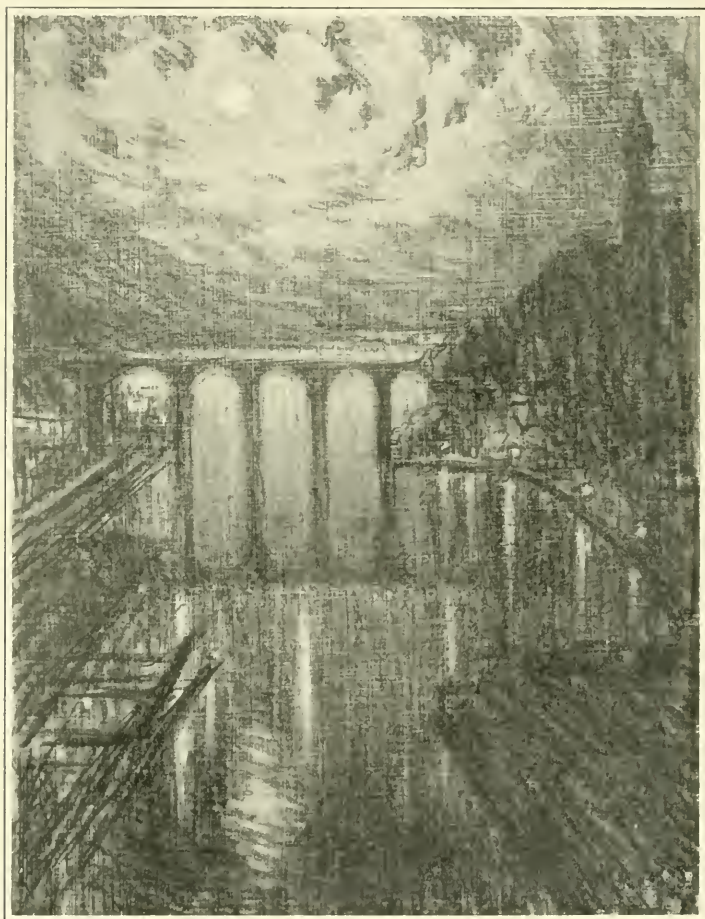
ingly of it. And he never wearies of the great river. Whether he crosses it by ferry, or glides down it by day-boat, or pushes up it by ocean-steamer, it is always the majestic river serenely sweeping downward to the sea — the river that flows by the first city of the New World, his city, the great New York.

Quite as impressive as this sunset scene is the Hudson by night when the brilliant ferry-boats ply forward and backward from shore to shore, when a vast circle of lights along the water line seems to surround one, reaching from Fort Lee to Gowanus Bay — a Milky Way more piercing than the stars and set with blazing constellations of electricity at many pier heads. All sorts of lights are burning there, and all sorts of colors are showing — red, yellow, green, blue, lilac. They burn on boats and barges, on docks and buoys, on mast heads and Liberty statues, all in a far panorama flung around one in a ring. The thousands of lights high above the water, glittering in rows against the eastern sky, are more obvious but still somewhat illusive. Each year the mass of lighted windows grows, until now at night the illusion of a city set upon a hill has become quite marked. The ridge of the hill appears, of course, along Broadway, where the highest sky-scrapers are set; and right in the center of it rises the illuminated tower of the Singer Building, blazing with edgings of light, fretted with golden fire,—a gigantic arabesque of electricity set against the heavens.

Down past the lighted city, by flaring docks and flashing ferries that are reflected from its broken surface, flows the great river. By night as by day, by sunlight or moonlight or starlight, it is always beautiful. Storm makes it less agreeable, as fog and ice more dangerous, but its beauty is not obliterated. Snow from the north and the lights of the city seen through it dimly and distantly, wind that seems to drive the water fiercely down the bay and turn the ferry-boats from their courses, waves blown into whitecaps by the gale and driven with a slash against the pier heads, are often more beautiful than the weave and ravel of moonlight on the water, or the stars mirrored and reflected from the blue-black floor.

In all moods and in all seasons the river is the majestic river. It is the wide tideway of the city bearing the fleets of passenger steamers, the long black hulls of commerce, the sails of pleasure, the despised lines of scows and lighters, even the dredgers of commercial necessity. As a water approach to a city it has few rivals. It might even be doubted if it has an equal.





PL. 72. — THE HARLEM

## DOCKS AND SHIPS





PL. XIX. — NEAR THE SHIPPING DISTRICT







THE TRUTH  
AND THE  
LIFE  
OF  
JESUS  
CHRIST

## CHAPTER XIX

### DOCKS AND SHIPS

LEST the unimaginative stranger gain the idea that the island of Manhattan is only a few acres of land in a large bay — the ordinary island that one sees in almost every harbor — perhaps it is worth while saying that one must travel some thirty miles to circumnavigate it; and lest, again, it be thought that the Greater New York is not a sea city, it may be said that there are five boroughs in it and only one of them (the Bronx) on the mainland. It is a city of islands, if we allow our fancy some play; but a city sea-worn rather than sea-born. Venice with its hundred islands was filled in, made by deposits of river silt; whereas New York was cut out, hewn by the waters from the native rock, separated from the mainland by its tideways. They are both cities of the sea, but not at all alike either physically or commercially.

In fact, any comparison between Venice and New York must emphasize the differences rather than the likenesses. For her hundred islands we have but three, but any one of ours outbulks all of hers put together. Again, the commerce of Venice was once considered very

large, and, when the city was "towering in her pride of place," there were thirty-five hundred sails in the service of the republic — a goodly showing for the Mediæval Age; but though New York has no great merchant marine of its own, there are twenty thousand craft a year that come into the port, and perhaps any thirty-five of its "tramp" steamers could carry all the goods and chattels of the Venetian thirty-five hundred. The seven-mile circumference of the Venetian islands, the hundred or more canals with their many wharves, seem again large in capacity; but New York has already over four hundred miles of docks and not one-half of its available shores are occupied. Venice, past or present, must be multiplied many times to reach up to New York; and even Liverpool with its one hundred and London with its two hundred miles of docks are out of the reckoning.

There is a fly in the ointment, however, about these docks. They are not of stone like those of London or Liverpool; they have not the massiveness of the quais of Havre nor even the solidity of the *fondamenti* of Venice. The majority of them are affairs of wood, propped up on piles driven in the mud, and have nothing to commend them except their cheapness and their convenience. Their lengths and heights vary considerably; some have sheds upon them and some have nothing at all; and their state of neglect or repair varies also.

The new docks of the Chelsea Improvement have two-

story sheds of structural steel, are eight hundred feet or more in length, and are, all told, great improvements on the old ones. The docks keep growing in size, and extending around the islands more and more each year; but even so, the demand seems greater than the supply. To meet this demand there is just now a prepared plan for eight docks along the Brooklyn water front from Twenty-Eighth Street to Thirty-Sixth Street, that shall be from twelve to eighteen hundred feet in length. Besides this there is a great project afoot for the utilization of Jamaica Bay by building docks on the bay islands, and dredging a channel in from the sea that shall accommodate the largest steamers. The cost of it is figured to be somewhere in the fifty millions, and the capacity is said to be something quite inexpressible in figures.

But neither the new nor the old docks are very beautiful. They are quaint enough when old and water-worn, and in connection with ships and colors they make a good background for pictures; but New York is not very proud of them (except possibly the Chelsea ones) and would rather they did not occupy so conspicuous a place at the city's entrance. Perhaps there is a similar feeling about the life along these docks. And yet the people by the water's edge are always unique in color and movement if not in intrinsic worth. They furnish variety in uniformity—the variety of many nations, for all the world gathers on the New York docks.

The early gathering place was no doubt the lower end of the East River. The Battery (which, by the way, never battered anything, at any time) was the first landing-place of the Dutch, and it was the region about South Ferry that afterward became an anchorage for their flat-bottomed, high-pooped ships. After the Revolution the large sailing craft that came into the harbor required deeper water to make landings; so the shallows were filled in from Front Street, the docks were pushed out into the stream, and South Street came into existence. In very recent years the docks have been extended still farther, and the shipping offices and storage houses along South Street are now some distance back from the pier heads. Some of the old buildings with new fronts are still standing; and, even to-day, there are huge schooners and square-rigged ships lying at the piers with bowsprits reaching over into the street. Some reminders of the days of clipper ships and the China trade linger, but are gradually being elbowed out of existence by newer enterprises.

The East River front of Manhattan is now a strange conglomeration of docks, trucks, shops, saloons, and warehouses. Many commercial interests are centered there, with many people and much activity. Everything is moving or being moved. At Coenties Slip, as one comes around from South Ferry, the activity is not at once apparent. There is a little park with bushes and trees (Jeannette Park) near by, which is usually well patronized

by the unemployed; and across the street from it there are scores of canal-boats tied together in the dock, that seem deserted and decadent. But a few steps farther on brings a change. Long piers run out into the river and brown-red sheds are alive with milling men and pulling horses. Steamers from Spain, Porto Rico, Havana, Galveston, ships from many southern ports, are unloading or taking on cargo. The street is a tangle of trucks, the sidewalk a turmoil of people, the shops a bustle of business. Many of the old buildings are occupied as shipping offices, storehouses, or ship chandleries. Anything needed on shipboard can be bought in such places — canvas, cordage, blocks, packing, pipes, tubes, oils, paints, lanterns, compasses, bells, swords, guns. Food and clothing supplies are near at hand; and the saloon along South Street, with its modicum of cheer, is never “hull down” on the horizon. When Jack or his captain comes ashore, there are plenty of opportunities offered him to get rid of his money before he reaches the Bowery.

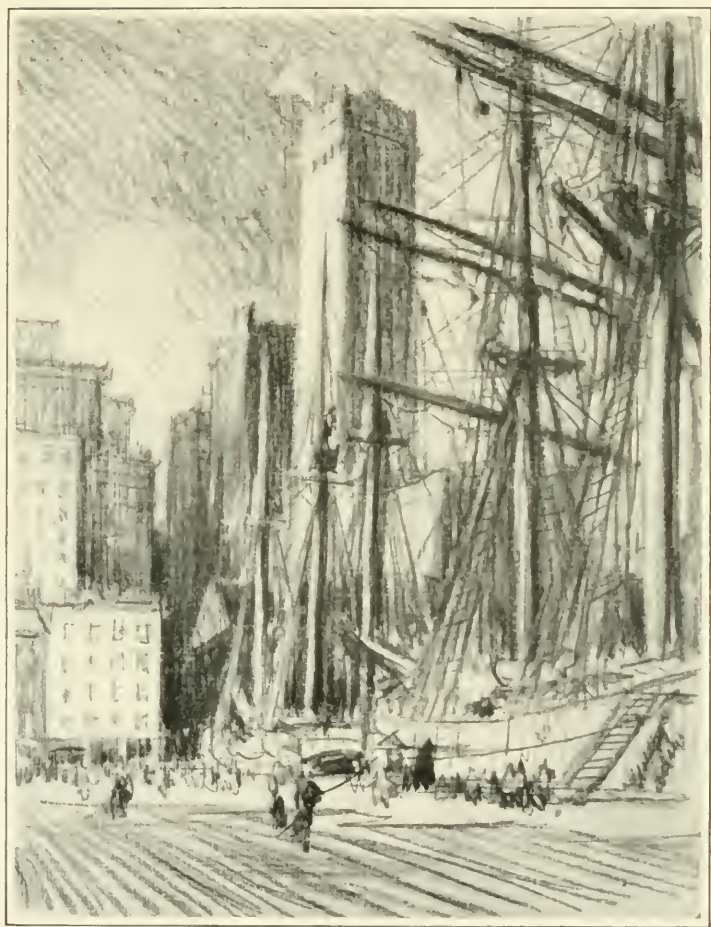
As one moves toward the Brooklyn Bridge the interests become more varied. The different slips widen out to the docks and furnish room for many warehouses and shops in low brick buildings, some of them with gambreled roofs and dormer windows. The docks are piled high with odd-looking boxes, with green and blue barrels; schooners and ships are anchored beside car floats loaded with yellow freight-cars; ferry-houses are near by from which bright-



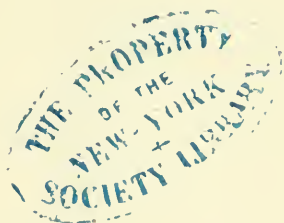
colored boats are coming and going; tugs are pushing and hauling at tows; steamers rush by with a splash and a swash. From the piers, looking up and over the tangle of trucks, perhaps the stranger catches a glimpse of the Broadway sky-scrapers, resting serenely in the far upper air like a ridge of snow mountains, quite unaffected by the noisy worry of the water front. How stupendous in size, how superb in light and air they seem by comparison with the junk shops and the dock sheds! Perhaps he glances around to the east, and there sees the swooping span of the Brooklyn Bridge, — still another contrast between the new and the old. Possibly later on he figures it out quietly by himself that the dirty docks and the greasy ships and the noisy trucks are after all not to be despised, for they made possible the beautiful bridge and paid for the immaculate-looking sky-scrapers. Commerce foots the bill, abuse it as we may.

South Street runs on under the Brooklyn Bridge, past Fulton Market with its fish stalls and tumble-down shops; past Peck Slip with its old houses; past Providence and New Haven steamers, the Manhattan Bridge, the little long park at Rutgers Slip; past warehouses, warehouses, warehouses. Scows are being filled with city refuse, cars are being unloaded with merchandise at the docks, factories and machine-shops are cropping out along the way, gas-houses and lumber-yards begin to bulk large. Right in the midst of this region (formerly a haunt of thieves)





PL. 73. — OLD SHIPS, SOUTH STREET



comes another surprise. This is Corlear's Park with its Italian-looking loggia and its eight acres sloping down to the open river. There are no piers or sheds here, and the water view is unobstructed. Sound steamers, sloops, schooners, lighters, ferry-boats slip past on the tide, up and under the Williamsburgh Bridge; and occasionally a motor-boat with its put-put, or some pleasure yacht, careens and pitches on its way. Off in the background, across the river, are the battle-ships that are being repaired at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, or the old hulks that have had their day and are now rotting at the dock. It is a picturesque spot just here at Corlear's Hook, where the river turns and where South Street comes to an end.

The North River, as the lower part of the Hudson is sometimes called, was not of much trade importance in the early days of New York. There were no docks along it because all the ships went to South Street. Sailing craft came around the Battery and went up the Hudson without stopping. They were seen and admired by the New Yorkers who had residences on the ridge, for the ridge was then famous for the "view." So late as 1800 old St. Paul's, Columbia College, and the Hospital looked down to the river and beheld a practically unobstructed panorama. There was no West Street then.

Before that time the water front was even more primitive. From Warren to Desbrosses Street was the "bouwerie" of Anneke Jans, whose many descendants

still dream of untold wealth coming to them when the law finally gives them their due. On either side of Canal Street was Lispenard's Meadows, where almost anything could be docked except a ship, and where nothing was trucked except loads of hay. Beyond came Greenwich Village with no vast commercial interests, though ships sometimes lay at anchor in the stream off from it. After this the shore line as far as Spuyten Duyvil Creek was unbroken and untrodden — Fort Gansevoort, which stood near the present market-place, and Fort Washington at One Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Street, being latter-day works.

But a great change has taken place since the days of the Dutch, or the English, or even the American occupation. Less than a hundred years has transformed the North River into a water-way for the ships of the world, the meadow front is now a broad street with the unceasing reverberation of traffic; and the waters' edge, from the Battery to the Riverside Park, is occupied by long piers and sheds where ocean liners are docked and unloaded. The ocean-carrying trade of New York is now located there. Practically all the important lines of passenger steamers have their docks there, or across the river at Hoboken.

Along the Chelsea region of the North River, scattered like the sky-scrapers on Broadway, are the huge transatlantic liners with sharp noses pushing in toward West Street. With them and near them are the smaller



PL. 74. — THE MAURETANIA

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
SOCIETY LIBRARY

steamers plying to Havana, Mexico, South America, Spain, Italy, Greece; the immigrant steamers coming up from Naples, Palermo, or Trieste; the coasting steamers from New Orleans, Galveston, Boston, Providence; the white river steamers running to Troy and Albany. In the foreign passenger trade alone there are some three hundred or more of these craft coming and going to this port; and the number of coasters that creep into the harbor at odd times and in strange ways mounts up into the thousands.

The "tramps," fruit carriers, cattle and tank steamers are of all kinds and descriptions, come from all over the seven seas and beyond, and fly the flags of every nation having a merchant marine. Besides these there are ships and sails of old-time merchants, perhaps, that have no regular sailings, casual ships with strange cargoes that come up from the underworld of China or Peru when they can, and go out again with grain, iron, or coal for distant seas when they must.

They make graceful combinations on the water, with their fine lines and colors, their smoke and steam, their gliding motion—these ships and sails. In fact, the North River, with its fleet of big and little craft and its many-colored flags, funnels, and hulls, makes a harbor view more lively and more imposing than Backhuisen or Willem van de Velde ever imagined. Not the least important values in the picture are the fore-and-aft sails of

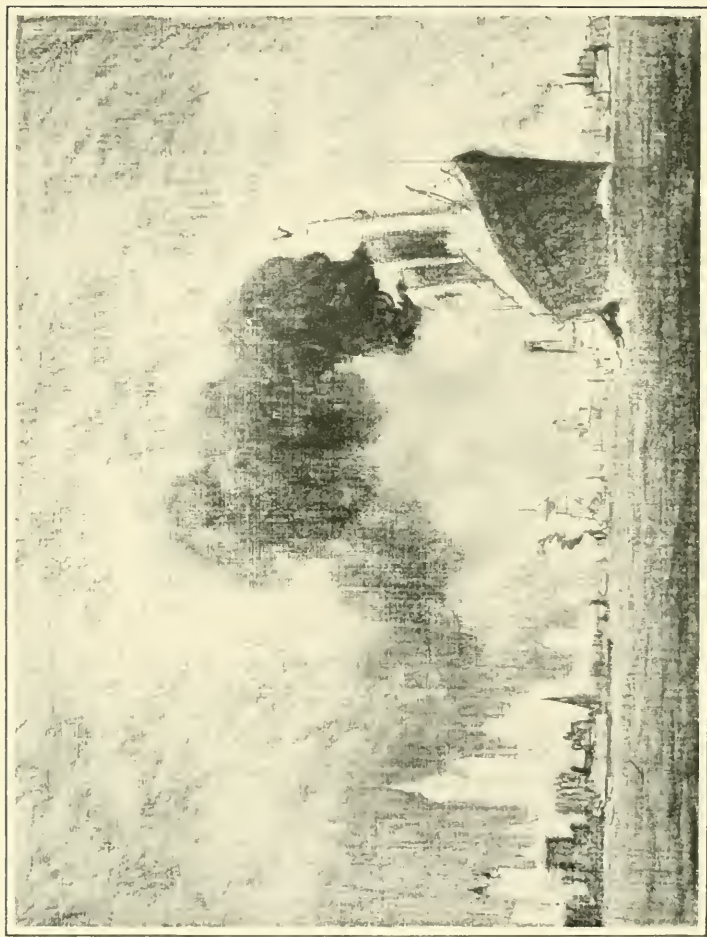


the huge six and seven masted schooners or the square sails of barks or brigs or full-rigged ships. Even the little spots of steam and color in tugs, fire-boats, car-floats, yachts, help out the picture by giving it brilliancy. When the red and green and olive ferries, the yellow revenue-cutters, the blue canal-boats, the white island-boats, with an occasional white and buff war-ship, are added to the scene, and the whole moving mass has the towering lower city at sunset for a background, the color of it becomes startling, bewildering, quite dazzling.

The piers on the North River where the big steamers are warped in and the little ones touch or are unloaded, are at least capacious; and capacity is, after all, an absolute necessity. Huge cargoes have to be handled upon them in short spaces of time, and many donkey engines, derricks, and hoists, with scores and scores of longshoremen, are in requisition. Hand trucks, horse trucks, auto-trucks, rumble here and there with boxes, bales, and barrels containing goods from everywhere — bananas from Jamaica, coffee from Mexico, tea from China, wine from France, macaroni from Italy, spices from the Indies, sugar from Cuba, woods from Brazil, pulp from Norway, cloths from England, cutlery from Germany. This freight handling is always more or less complicated, because the docks are the distributing places where goods are sorted over and re-shipped to different points throughout the country. Moreover, for every cargo coming in there is perhaps a



THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY



PL. 75.—TUGS AND STEAMERS

larger cargo going out. Silks and rugs and works of art may be arriving at one side of the pier; and beef, machinery, shoes, be departing by the other side. Add to this foreign trade, the domestic trade by river, Sound, and shore, by railway and tramway; add further the passenger traffic along these piers from ferry and steamer, the come and go by car and cab and carriage, and it can easily be imagined that the North River piers and docks are places of activity, centers of energy.

Though thousands are at work about these piers and are continually crossing each other's path, there is usually little confusion. Everything moves systematically and everyone understands the law of traffic in the city,—keep to the right and keep moving. In and out of these pier sheds all day (and sometimes all night), people, trucks, and carts move in files, loading and unloading, passing and repassing. West Street receives them and rejects them and receives them again. The wide thoroughfare seems always in an uproar (except on Sunday); and, of course, traffic occasionally gets into a tangle.

This is not to be wondered at, for the mass and the mix of West Street are something quite out of the ordinary. It is *facile princeps* the street of trucks in the whole city. Every conceivable kind of a vehicle—dray, express-wagon, mail-wagon, furniture-van, butcher-cart, garbage-cart, beer-skid, beam-reach—is there. Sandwiched in among them or dashing across them are cabs, carriages, hansom,

automobiles. Dozens of trolley cars run across this street to the different ferry-houses; two car tracks run the full length of it, and down these tracks, perhaps in the busiest portion of the day, will come a long train of freight-cars of the New York Central Railroad. Such a hurly-burly of traffic naturally produces the "jam" which sometimes requires the services of the police to straighten out.

The dock side of West Street is laid with asphalt, but the street proper, where the trucks and trolleys go, is paved with stone blocks — Belgian blocks. The jar and jolt, the shock and rumble, arising from these stones is not pleasant. No one can hear himself talk during traffic hours, except the cabbies and the truck drivers. Even they are usually purple in the face from trying to outroar the rumble, though sometimes they get blue and green with wrath when a collision takes place, and they exchange compliments about each other's driving.

The human voice, however, does not reach very far in West Street. A gong, a honk, or a whistle does better service. People, when they want to chat quietly, go inside. The "inside" is a saloon, a restaurant, a shop, or an office of the kind usually found along the sea edge of a city. The North River interior is newer than that of the East River but, in character, not essentially different. The shipping agencies, supply stores, warehouses, factories, mills, markets, lumber-yards, with all kinds of little dens that sell drink or food or clothing to the longshoremen, are

also apparent. They are not cleanly-looking or inviting. The dust of the street and the habits of the crowd keep them grimy and bedraggled-looking. But they are picturesque. Even the blatant sign with its high-keyed coloring belongs here and helps complete the picture. Modern commerce in West Street, with its trucks and liners and dingy buildings, is just as pictorial, and far more truthful, than, say, Claude's shipping and seaports, with classic palaces and quais smothered in a sulphur sunset. But it may be admitted that a proper angle of vision and some perspective are needed to see it that way.

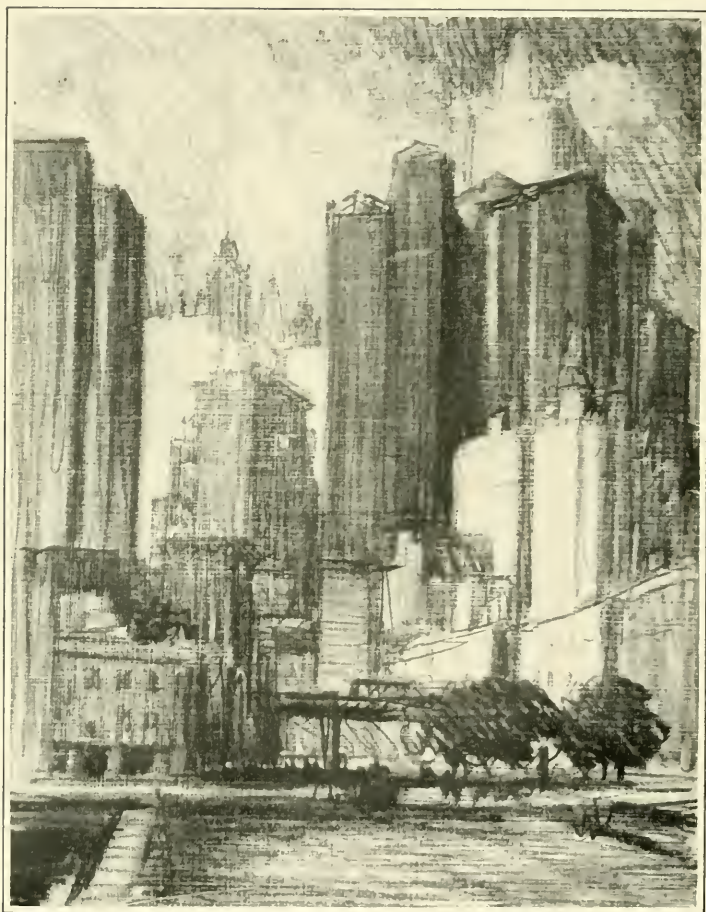
And around the water front on West Street, as well as South Street, one meets with a soiled and unkempt-looking mass of humanity that is quite as picturesque in its way as the streets or the buildings. It is by no means made up of New Yorkers alone. The races of the earth seem to have sent representatives to it, each one speaking his own language. The waifs and strays that have been jettisoned violently from foreign ships, the stowaways from the liners, the tramps from the railways, all gather along the docks looking for something to turn up. Among them one can see blacks from Jamaica, browns from India, yellows from the Malay Peninsula, whites from Europe, and half-tones from South America. It is a colorful mass of humanity in both face and costume, and it has the further artistic element of repose about it. That is to say, it sits down in the sunshine whenever it can, and works only by fits and

starts. Its color is oftener seen in conjunction with some convenient barrel or saloon bar than elsewhere. No doubt there are many hard-working, decent citizens among the longshoremen, but as a class they are given a rather bad name. Thieves and "dock rats" mingle with them, thugs like their company, derelicts from every sea, ne'er-do-wells from every shore, join them. The police do not hold them in the highest esteem.

Yet the longshoremen are as much a part of New York as the ship-owners, agents, clerks, commuters, and other well-dressed people that pass along West Street — an interesting part at that. And West Street is a characteristic New York thoroughfare furnishing both color and contrast with quite as much vividness as Broadway. It is neither a soulful nor a sanitary belt, nor is it a place where one can rest body or mind; but it has swirls of motion, flashes of light, combinations of tones that are at least entertaining. The place and the people complement each other.







PL. 76. — FROM COENTIES SLIP



## BREATHING SPACES





PL. XX. — MORNINGSIDE PARK





THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
NEW YORK

## CHAPTER XX

### BREATHING SPACES

THE demand for parks, with their groves, meadows, lakes, and rambles, dates back to the hanging gardens of Babylon, if not to the Garden of Eden. Mankind has always loved the open spaces, especially when shut up in cities; and to-day, whenever an odd acre comes into a city's possession, its Common Council is straightway invited to make a park of it and name it after the last statesman of the town.

This demand does not come solely from those who feed the squirrels and study the birds. Everybody recognizes that parks are something of the country in the city, that they mean much pleasure to the town-dwellers, and are beautiful fields of color in a wilderness of steel and stone. Moreover, they are supposed to add to urban healthfulness. Settlement workers and city-beautiful folk talk about them as "the lungs of the city"; and possibly some fancy we should stop breathing without them. Naturally enough, they are considered desirable possessions.

But the lung metaphor is somewhat deceptive. The

parks breathe for themselves, not for us. Trees, grass, flowers, and the open ground all absorb sunlight and air; they do not give them out. Instead of adding to our store they are taking away from us what they can. Of course, they help us negatively. The parks are attractive, we are drawn toward them and into the open; we thus get a larger quantity from the general supply of air and light than we otherwise would, and are benefited thereby. The result is the same and the conclusion reached is perhaps correct enough. The parks are breathing spaces of unquestionable value to the city's health.

As regards the supply of fresh air perhaps New York is better off than is generally realized. Manhattan, it will be remembered, is an island with broad surrounding water-ways; and up and down these water-ways move winds that are forever changing and renewing the atmosphere of the city. There is never a day when the East River has not its breeze. The great wind areas of Long Island Sound and the Lower Bay are connected by this strait; and the air, like the water, draws through from one to the other. Blackwell's Island in warm weather is cool when the Central Park is like an oven; and the East Siders, on their recreation piers, are comfortably enjoying the bands and the breezes while many a Fifth Avenue dinner party is gasping for breath behind a row of boxed bushes on the terrace of some fashionable restaurant.

The Hudson is no such wind-way as the East River.



The air current through the Palisades and beyond is much slighter, and on some summer days it is almost non-existent. Usually, however, a breeze is stirring there, and in winter, with snow, the Hudson can furnish forth a gale to suit the taste of the most exacting. At all times it is a part of the circuit. Were it not, New York would be a much hotter place in summer than it is at present, which is something no sane citizen likes to think about.

Above the rivers and above the city there are still other movements of air — the alternation and variation of land and sea breezes. Down in the small side streets they are not felt perhaps, but the high roof-gardens and the upper stories of the sky-scrapers are never without them. The flags up there are waving from their staffs, the white steam is cut off quickly from its pipe and blown away; the gray smoke streams out pennant-like and is soon lost. It is these breezes of the upper space that the sky-scraper gathers on its high walls and shunts down into the street, sometimes to the pedestrian's disgust, and sometimes to his great relief. That the lower city has now cooler and better-ventilated streets than before the era of high buildings, there can be no question. To compensate for this the high buildings have cut off some light, and yet the darkening of the lower streets is not very apparent. Exchange Place is always cited as an example of modern street gloom, but it was never other than a narrow alley at any time.

The air and the light of New York are excellent in both quantity and quality. That people build apartment-houses and offices to exclude them is unfortunately true. In utilizing every foot of rentable space, rooms have been constructed where neither air nor light can enter except in a crippled way. Unsanitary conditions are likely to arise from such economy, and, possibly, it is a recognition of this that drives so many apartment-house and tenement-house people to the parks. There, or promenading the streets or on a roof-garden, is about the only place where comparatively pure air and light are obtainable.

Quite contrary to the prevailing belief, New York is well supplied with parks. It is usually assumed that the Central Park is our one and only "lung"; whereas Manhattan, alone, has some thirty or more open spaces, distributed throughout the borough, and doing service as parks or playgrounds. The dweller on the ridge, whose business is at one end of Broadway and his residence not far from the other end, knows only half a dozen. Stuyvesant Park with its fine trees, East River Park with its view of the water at Eighty-Fifth Street, and Jefferson Park opposite Little Hell Gate have probably escaped him. On the West Side the charming little Hudson Park with its trees and water garden and green grass is quite as unknown as the open grounds of the General Theological Seminary at Twenty-Second Street, or the Clinton and Audubon parks farther north. They are all open spaces,

like Union Square and the Battery; and are greatly enjoyed by their own communities, though Fifth Avenue knows them not.

The Central Park is, however, the chief oasis, and one that New Yorkers are vastly proud of. It is the largest of the Manhattan parks, being two and a half miles long by half a mile wide and containing eight hundred and forty acres. In 1857 it was a denuded region sacred to swamps, rocks, refuse, and squatters. From that unhappy condition it was rescued by the genius of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and converted into a beautiful piece of landscape. At the time of its taking over Mr. Olmsted said of it that it "had less desirable characteristics for a park" than any other six hundred acres on the island. Nevertheless, such natural features as it possessed in hills, ravines, hollows, and waters were retained and emphasized. It was not made wholly artificial like the Boboli Gardens in Florence, nor allowed to run to mere grass and trees like the Prater in Vienna. The original endowment was cleverly utilized, and the stranger to-day does not know where nature leaves off and art begins. It is a beautiful blend of the two, resembling nothing so much as the well-kept grounds and gardens of some large country seat.

Yet the Central Park, for all its variety in water, hill, and meadow, its grace of roadways, bridle-paths, and foot-paths, its charm of color in trees and vines and flowers,

has several notable defects. By reason of being imbedded in the city it is an interior park without a water front — something that is sadly missed. Again, it lacks commanding ground, an eminence from which a view of the city or the surrounding country would be obtainable. Just now, hemmed in as it is by high apartment-houses and hotels, it begins to look cramped in its quarters. Still again, it has no large trees, nothing of the primeval forest. When the ground was taken over by the city fifty years ago, it was practically bare. Half a million trees, shrubs, and vines have been set out there since, and the result has been most astonishing. The trees now stand thick in spots, the undergrowth of shrubs is a delightful tangle, and the happy disposition of flowering bush and plant along the driveways calls for nothing but praise; yet one misses the big trees of the Bronx and the Pelham Bay parks.

And once more (to go on with the defects of its character), the Central Park has not flat spaces enough to lend that quality of repose so essential in landscape. It is a series of turns, twists, elevations, and depressions, full of strange and beautiful surprises, stimulating, even exciting; but not restful or peaceful. Its scant Meadow, with its "babble of green fields," does little more than suggest the rural. It is a meadow of a lovely if limited beauty, a city meadow nurtured by art. The whole park is like it — a beautiful exotic, a rare orchid, ornate in form and dis-



PL. 77. — LAKE IN THE CENTRAL PARK

THE PROPERTY  
OF  
THE  
SOCIETY

tinguished in color; but not a field daisy, not a flower of the forest.

But those who drive in the Central Park every afternoon never think of its defects nor question its superiority. To them it is one of the loveliest spots in all the world. And in the early spring, when the jonquils and Forsythia are in bloom, when the young grass is just starting, and the stems and buds are reddening along the way, you are quite ready to agree with them. Nothing could be more charming than the park at this time, unless it is the same park later in the season when the azaleas and rhododendrons are out, or bushes like the syringa are in blossom. All through the summer there is change and variety in the bloom, and when the winter arrives, the Belvedere, the Mall, the Ramble are still beautiful in their lines even under a mantle of snow.

Very different from this enclosure is the open strip of land along the Hudson called Riverside Park. It is a high, commanding bench of ground looking out over the river to Weehawken and the Palisades, and is without doubt the finest driveway in Manhattan. Even Mr. Henry James has something good to say of its natural location, if not of our utilization of it: —

“She (New York) has come at last far upon the west side, into the possession of her birthright, into the roused consciousness that some possibility of a river front may still remain to her; though, obviously, a



justified pride in this property has yet to await the birth of a more responsible sense of style in her dealings with it, the dawn of some adequate plan or controlling idea. Splendid the elements of position, on the part of the new 'Riverside Drive' (over the small, suburbanizing name of which, as at the effect of a second-rate, shop-worn article, we sigh as we pass); yet not less irresistible the pang of our seeing it settle itself on meagre bourgeois happy-go-lucky lines. The pity of this is sharp in proportion as the 'chance' has been magnificent, and the soreness of perception of what merely might have been is as constant as the flippancy of the little vulgar 'private houses' or the big vulgar apartment hotels, that are having their own way so unchallenged, with the whole question of composition and picture. The fatal 'tall' pecuniary enterprise rises where it will, in the candid glee of new worlds to conquer; the intervals between take whatever little foolish form they like; the sky line, eternal victim of the artless jumble, submits again to the type of the broken hair comb turned up; the streets that abut from the east condescend at their corners to any congruity or poverty that may suit their convenience. And all this in presence of an occasion for noble congruity such as one scarce knows where to seek in the case of another great city."<sup>1</sup>

But commercial New York, with all its greed, has not ruined the Riverside Park. On the contrary, a good many people have thought it much improved by its terraces and stone copings, its paths down to the water, and its little towers and pavilions. Seen from the upper river it is rather an imposing-looking park in its monuments and

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, December, 1905.



marbles, its trees and grass and flowers. As for its skirting residences, they might be worse. In fact, we have seen worse along the banks of the Thames and the Seine — residences that never have received a word of criticism on the score of either ugliness or commercialism. Farther up the island there is a pendant to it (now fast changing into a continuation of it), an inside park — the Speedway along the Harlem. It is not so provocative of the adjective as the Riverside Drive, but is not the less a beautiful stretch along the water with high woods and gracefully turned hills on its western side.

But any one of the Greater New York boroughs is better off than Manhattan in its parks. The borough of the Bronx, for instance, has in the Bronx Park not only six hundred odd acres of land, but a river with a gorge, many hills and meadows, and real forests. Van Cortlandt Park is still larger, with over eleven hundred acres; and it also has forests, glen, meadow, stream, and lake, where people can go without being warned off the grass, where golf and tennis and ball can be played without let or hindrance, and where beautiful gardens can be studied quietly and loved at leisure.

The largest park, however, is that of Pelham Bay, with its seventeen hundred acres. Perhaps this has the greatest possibilities of all, for by the disposition and the quantity of its land it is capable of bringing the real shore-and-country scene into the city proper. At

present it is somewhat apart from the life of the metropolis. It lies beside Long Island Sound and is six miles from the Harlem River. The growth of Manhattan has not extended up the shore of the Sound. The facilities of transit are not good, and perhaps the time-honored tradition of "malaria" continues. At any rate, Pelham Bay is quite primitive; and the magnificent park, though under the park commission, has not been "laid out" like a Sans-Souci. Its nine miles of shore line, its islands and little caves and bathing beaches, are still intact and practically untouched; its broad, flat meadows and its great trees have not been wasted or denuded or cut up in any way. It is a superb natural park, open to the Sound view and swept by the Sound breezes. In a short time, when traveling there is made easier, the people of the city will discover that this is their real playground — the most rural and restful of all their parks.

Prospect Park in Brooklyn is another city-hemmed space like the Central Park in Manhattan. It is not so large by several hundred acres, but it is in many respects a finer and more beautiful spot of green. It has high ground with a commanding view of the greater city, the harbors, the islands, the channels, the sea. Indeed, it was this high ground that was chosen for the battle of Long Island in 1776, and near it a tablet and a monument record the place and the event. The people of Brooklyn were wise in reserving this five-hundred-acre tract as a memorial,



PL. 78. — ST. NICHOLAS AVENUE

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
MUSEUM OF  
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

as well as for a present need. Fortunately, many of its old trees were still standing when the park was taken over in 1866, and to-day they are one of the attractive features of the place. Besides these there are meadows, parade grounds, terraces with great masses of flowers, drives, bridle-paths, lakes, rambles, fountains — all that art can do to supplement nature. In addition there is its imposing Flatbush Avenue entrance. A plaza has been formed with shrubbery borders, and in the center of it a massive masonry arch in honor of the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War has been erected. On top of it is MacMonnies' spirited bronze quadriga. From this main entrance one can drive straight down the avenue and over the new Manhattan Bridge into Manhattan; while from the southeastern entrance he can drive in the opposite direction by the Ocean Parkway straight to Manhattan Beach and the sea.

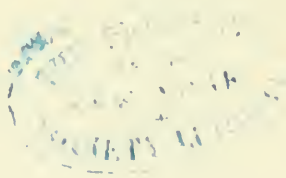
But Prospect Park is not the only breathing place, nor the best one, in the borough of Brooklyn. The East River shore and the Brooklyn Heights are excellent in view and in air; and down below Gowanus Bay, where the shore runs into the driveway to Coney Island, the view becomes vast and magnificent. This shore road, with its ridges and meadows that slope down to the water's edge, is to the lower harbor what Riverside Drive is to the Hudson — a point of outlook upon natural beauty. The flat water of the Upper Bay and the Narrows, with its stately ships

moving seaward, the distant heights of Staten Island, the near water-edge, with its small craft at anchor, the meadows still rank with wild flowers, and (in contrast) the road with its artistic bridges and arches, make up a picture perhaps superior to the Hudson with its Palisades.

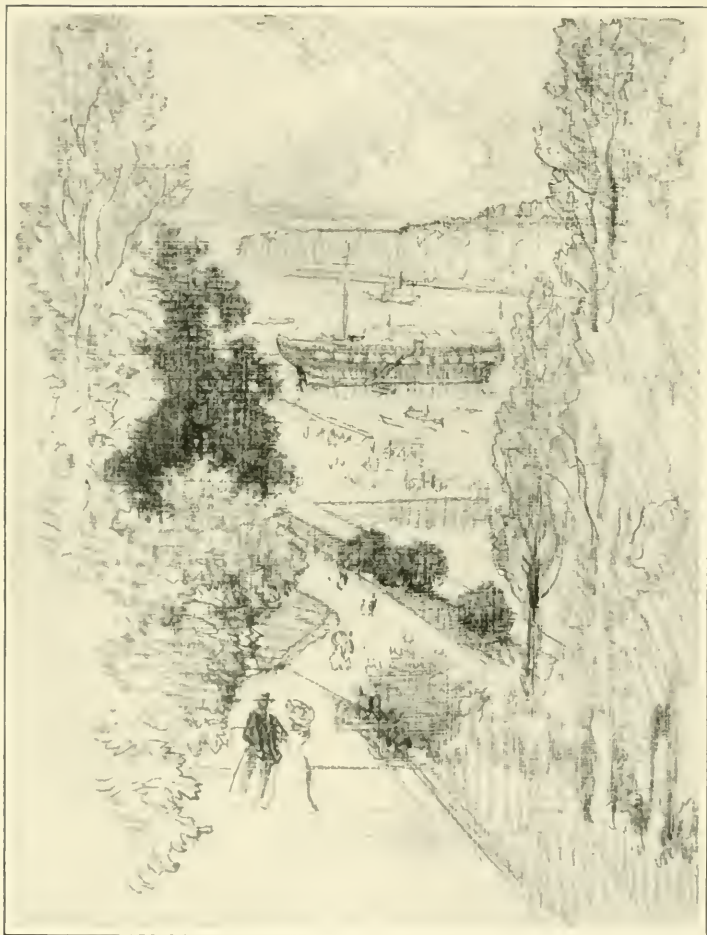
And what a restful picture! On summer nights when the moon is up and the wind is stirring, what a road this is to travel — this winding road to the sea! The glittering waters are like those of Lethe, inducing forgetfulness of the city and its business; the ghostly ships with their silver sails are full of poetry and romance; the road flows on in serpentine windings through a mystery of light and shadow. It is Brooklyn's most beautiful parkway, and some day, when it is extended from the bridges to Coney Island, it will be possibly the finest shoreway in all the world.

One can see a future for these roads and drives and shoreways. The new city needs them as entrances and exits, even more than as pleasure grounds. Wide boulevards in all directions, above ground and below it, are crying necessities of transit. About the parks, however, one wonders and perhaps has doubts. Will the press of business and the crowds of people eventually crush them out? In the boroughs of Queens and Richmond there are few parks as yet established.<sup>1</sup> The open country is still existent there in thousands of acres. But in crowded Manhattan it is very different. In the congested districts

<sup>1</sup> Systems of parks have been planned for both.







PL. 79. --PALISADES AND THE HUDSON

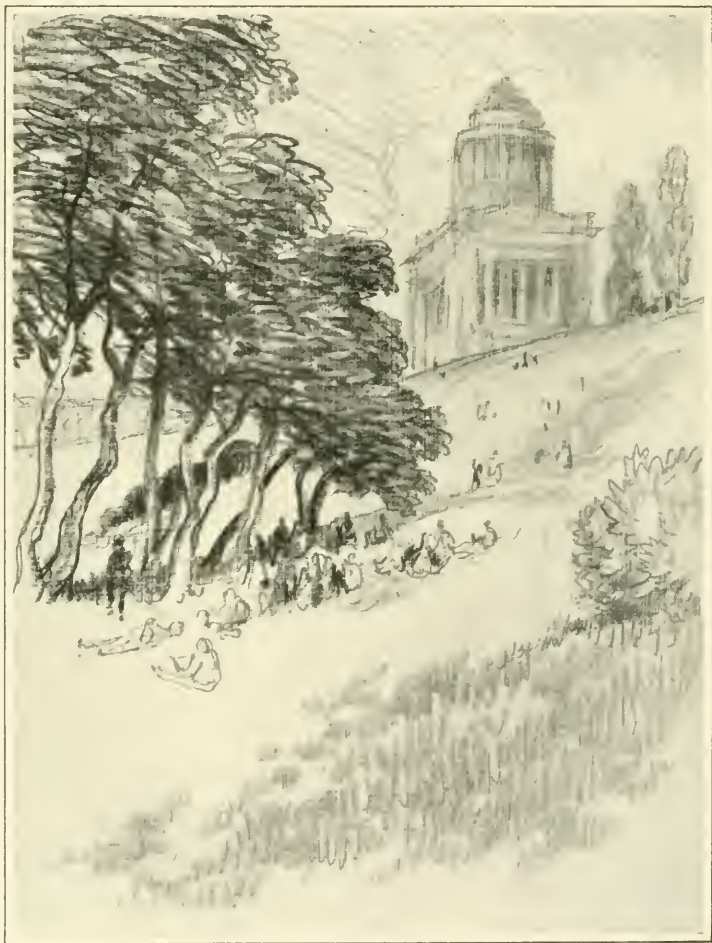


many of the little parks have been converted into bare playgrounds where nothing green grows. It was a necessity. The tramp of many feet requires a pavement. Besides, the park commissioners will tell you of thousands of dollars' worth of trees, shrubs, and flowers put out on parkways one day, and absolutely disappearing, root and branch, before the next day. And, aside from wear and vandalism, gases with electricity and the close air of the city are fighting against vegetation. Even the rain that comes to it is tinged with sulphuric acid by falling through city smoke; and that means destruction to almost everything — copper, glass, tin roofs, and growing life alike. Year by year the trees in the smaller parks seem to look more haggard, the grass more bleached and sparse, the flowers more like half-starved house plants. Will they eventually disappear and the parks be turned into mere open areas like Trafalgar Square or the Place de la Concorde?

Business, to do it justice, is rather fond of the parks. Down town it enjoys the pale thin trees and grasses of Trinity and St. Paul's, and up town it drives in the Central Park with both pride and pleasure. But some day business is to absorb the whole island of Manhattan, the residences will be converted into stores and offices, the streets will be for motor wagons only, business men will walk on second-story platforms, and the women and children will be housed beyond the thirty-mile circle.

In that not-distant day what will become of the parks and their growths? Will they be flattened into asphalt and swept by the vagrant winds, or will they be built up with steel and stone structures? In New York everything keeps shifting, moving on, passing away. How shall the parks escape the swift transition and the general change?





PL. 80. — RIVERSIDE DRIVE — GRANT'S TOMB

# MUNICIPAL ART





PL. XXI. — ENTRANCE TO PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN









## CHAPTER XXI

### MUNICIPAL ART

UNFORTUNATELY for the building of the modern city, its citizens never know when, where, or how it is to be built. If they did, perhaps that "plan," which is considered so essential to every municipal growth, would be forthcoming at the start. As it is, the dozen or more people who are to-day congregating on a point of land near a stretch of water, somewhere in Texas or Minnesota, have no idea of a city of a hundred thousand deriving from their beginnings. The "plan" to them is superfluous. They build where they please, and the town just "grows," taking whatever form necessity or convenience indicates. Almost all the cities in the United States have grown in that fashion.

But after a city has come to importance, commercially or otherwise, there is a recognition of its defects, and plans are drawn to remedy them by tearing down miles of buildings, or appropriating private property for parks, driveways, and water fronts. The improvements, however, are seldom carried out in their entirety because of expense. Baron Haussmann, to be sure, under a ruler like Napoleon III, slashed Paris into boulevards; but it

would be quite impossible to do that now with London or Chicago or New York. There is some tearing down and widening of streets in all these cities, some following of a plan; but it is usually a compromise which leaves much to be desired. The cramped city still exists, and to distract attention from its lack of grouping and its want of entrances, or to beautify in spots and places wanting the larger opportunity, city boards or commissions sometimes indulge in the small ornament of sculpture, fountains, lamp-posts, and letter-boxes.

Usually, however, these boards or commissions that have to do with beautifying the city are possessed of small power and are required to make bricks without straw — to make something out of nothing.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally a park commission is given an open space which it turns into a little park; but the space is usually some odd angle or hole in the ground that no one wants, and which has been used as a dumping-ground for years. The value of parks in a city is something no longer questioned, and yet, strange enough, they are about the last things acquired. After the best sites have been taken by warehouses, factories, offices, and residences, the left-over marsh, the inaccessible hillside, the outgrown cemetery may be used for a park, if human ingenuity can convert it into one. And it is often astonishing what beauty spots are made

<sup>1</sup> The Art Commission in New York has merely the power of approving or disapproving plans submitted to it.

out of these abandoned spaces. The Central and the Morningside parks in Manhattan are illustrations to the point.

The commissions do not usually have such large areas of light and color to deal with in recomposing the city picture. Their opportunities are less magnificent. They are oftener asked merely to suggest the place for a new piece of sculpture — equestrian or otherwise — or to find a site for a memorial arch or a soldiers' monument. Of course, there is no money to purchase ground with, and consequently they look about for city property, to be had perhaps for the asking. Almost invariably the choice falls upon the parks; and the sculpture or the monument goes up along a foot-path, or a carriage way, in some prominent place where the public must see it whether they like it or not.

It is hard to imagine a worse conjunction of nature and art than this. A park is a place where people sometimes go to get rid of art, to get away from society and civilization, to get back to Mother Earth for a brief spell. Those who frequent it are, for the time being at least, more interested in the sculpture of the trees than in the modeling of horses' legs and men's uniforms. The Metropolitan Museum, for instance, filled as it is with valuable collections, has no pertinence nor place in the Central Park; and the Cleopatra's Needle near it has no significance here nor there nor anywhere in America. The Soldiers' Monument

and Grant's Tomb on the Riverside Drive are not so objectionably located, because the drive is less of a park than an enlarged boulevard; but even so it may be questioned if they add to the beauty of the front. As for the smaller sculptures in the parks — the single figures, busts, crouching animals, and smiling publicans that peer out from beneath overhanging trees or pose grandly from commanding knolls — they should all be removed. The cast-iron deer lying on the front lawn, and the white-winged angel of the fountain, which meant "art" to us forty years ago, were not more inappropriately placed than the present-day statues in the public parks. Both nature and art suffer by the unhappy union. There should be an absolute divorce, and the parties forbidden to remarry.

Sculpture belongs in the streets and paved squares. Originally it was an accessory or complementary art, and was used to adorn architecture. Even to-day it is seen at its best in conjunction with buildings, or near them. A place like Columbus Circle, a triangle as at the meeting of Broadway and Fifth Avenue, a Plaza, or a Bowling Green, are the proper places for detached groups. Any paved square, or open spot devoid of trees, is much to be preferred to a park or drive-way. Bronze or marble blends with and matches brick or granite better than it does trees and grass. Besides, both represent human activities and perhaps belong together in what they express. The public



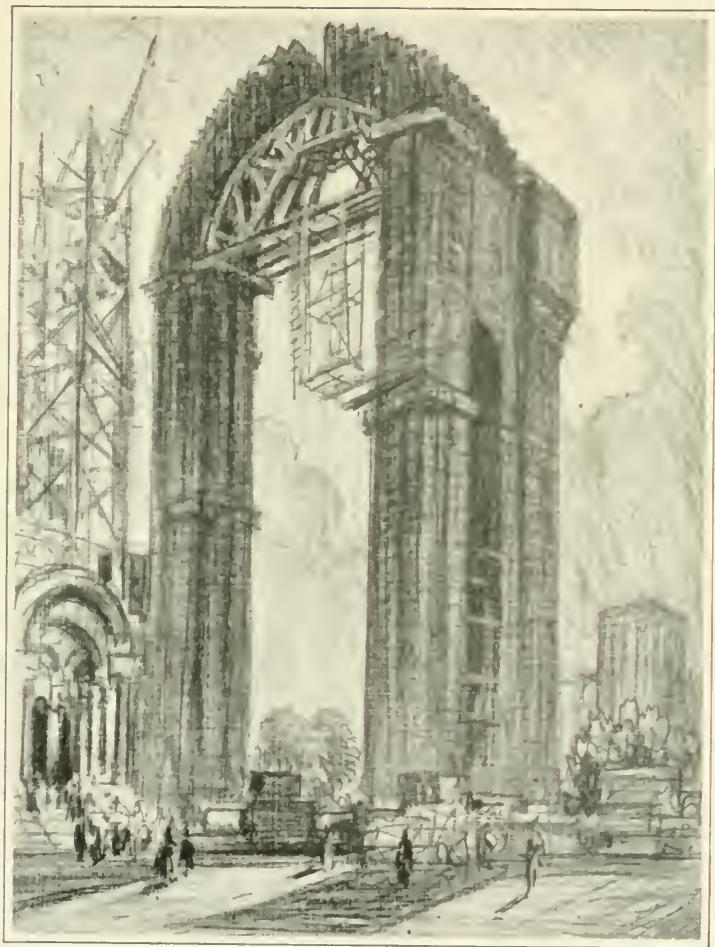
buildings, if not too high, are, of course, appropriate places for sculpture, as witness the Municipal Court Building on Madison Square, or the Custom House at Bowling Green. The City Hall, the Public Library, the Library of Columbia University, the Museum of Natural History, St. Patrick's Cathedral, St. John's Cathedral, are other places where it would not only show to advantage, but materially enhance the architecture. Ordinarily the approaches to bridges would be considered excellent opportunities for the use of sculpture, but just here we run afoul of trouble, at least as regards the bridges of New York. It is the difficulty of scale, of which mention has already been made,—a difficulty that must be met by artists, art societies, and city commissions, and somehow reconciled.

We have borrowed most of our ideas of civic sculpture from the older capitals of Europe. The modest scale of that sculpture was, and is still, quite appropriate to London and Paris and Vienna with their five- and six-story buildings and their small river bridges; but how does it comport with the twenty-story sky-scrapers and the colossal suspension bridges of the new New York? How shall the ordinary street sculpture make itself seen or heard or felt amid these enormous masses of steel and granite? Aside from its failure or success in expressing the ideals of a twentieth-century people, does it or is it possible for it to decorate the city adequately? There is no quarrel with that fine European-inspired art of the past. It served

its purpose well; but is it sufficient for the new era and the new people? Let us look at a few examples.

Twenty years ago Saint Gaudens' "Farragut" on the edge of Madison Square was quite in keeping with its surrounding buildings. It was to be seen from a distance, in an environment that did it no great violence; and everyone looked up to it and admired it for its sturdy strength and dignity. With its fine pediment and exedra it was one statue, at least, in the city that was worth looking at as civic decoration. But what about it to-day, surrounded as it is by cloud-capped towers and enormous buildings? Is it not dwarfed into a statuette and rendered somewhat insignificant? It is the same statue as twenty years ago, but it has suffered a change by being thrown out of scale. A similar feeling possesses one about the superb "Sherman" in the Plaza, though it is larger in size, and in a less confined space, than the "Farragut." That thin, determined rider and the lean, mettlesome horse have become absolutely attenuated by the lofty hotels around them. The group begins to look like a mantel ornament — something for the Metropolitan Museum, rather than the Plaza. And there is the Dodge statue in Herald Square, another good illustration, if rather bad art. Who sees it for the huge shops about it? But yesterday a native New Yorker was insisting that there was no statue of any kind in Herald Square — at least, he had not noticed one there in the last ten years.





PL. 81. — ST. JOHN THE DIVINE (IN CONSTRUCTION)



Nor has sculpture fared well when employed on the sky-scrapers themselves. What could be done with figures on, say, the Flatiron or the Times Building or the Trinity Building down town? You may detach an eighteen-foot Diana from Madison Square tower by using it for a weather vane, and by thus placing it in relief against the sky gain an effect of graceful line; but place the Diana, or any other eighteen-foot figure, in a niche three hundred and seventy feet from the street, in the tower of the Metropolitan Life Building, and what would become of it? It is hardly possible to get either an expressive or a decorative effect from figures twenty stories up in the air. Sculpture was never designed or fitted for such structures. These enormous buildings have not only outgrown the plastic arts, but all the architectural orders as well. Columns and pedestals and pilasters, with carved entablatures and pediments, fail to eke out the distances or hold as ornament. They are inadequate, as, indeed, are almost all of the building contrivances of the past when confronted with this new problem. The problem, with its decorative effects, must be worked out on a new basis, and on a much larger and more comprehensive scale. To declare the skyscraper "hideous" and to pray its speedy abolition is to evade the question. The tall building is here to stay and must be reckoned with.

Of course, the smaller "village improvement" features

that are from time to time discussed by municipal art societies, are destined to neglect in New York from sheer want of importance. When the city is built up with tall buildings, of what vital interest the color of a letter-box or the shape of an electrolier? In Florence a brass bowl for a barber's sign, hung above a door, looks rather pretty, and a wrought-iron design that advertises a locksmith in Nuremberg is quaint and interesting; but what could you do with them in front of the Park Row Building or the Hotel Astor? How is the man who occupies the eighteenth story of the Terminal Building to advertise his wares except at night by an electric device? It is useless to discuss the time-honored sign, whether in brass or iron or gold, as either an ornament or an excrescence, so far as the sky-scraper is concerned. It will not be used at all, because it will not be seen. Anyone who looks over the new high-building region of New York must be impressed by the absence of old-fashioned signs.

Fortunately for New York, those who have the planning and the improving of the city in their keeping or on their conscience, hunt larger game than signs, house numbers, gas fixtures, and commemorative tablets. They have an idea that New York is to be a great city, with its business center located in Manhattan, and that it is vitally important there be more and larger exits and entrances. With that thought they have planned new avenues, new



PL. 82. — WARD'S PILGRIM, THE CENTRAL PARK



wharves and water fronts, new methods of relieving the congestion of freight as well as of passengers, new bridge approaches and terminals. In connection with this, both for use and beauty, they have planned the widening of Fifth Avenue, the removal of the Central Park walls and the making of broad parkways on either side, the linking, by the bridges, of Manhattan and its park systems with the other boroughs and their park systems. Still further, they hope by locating new city buildings, to produce a civic center from which avenues shall radiate through the greater city, touching other centers in the different boroughs. Finally, they hope to make monuments of city art out of school buildings, libraries, engine houses, and other public edifices, and to give them proper setting by grouping them in smaller centers about parks or open squares.

All this is quite as it should be, provided it is carried out on a sufficiently large scale — a scale in proportion to the new city. Presumably, many of the plans will never be executed, and possibly some formalism will be avoided thereby. The tendency of any plan is to produce rigidity and to destroy picturesqueness of which New York is at present such a fine example; but there is no doubt about the planned city being the more convenient and the more impressive at first blush. Paris became “a city of magnificent distances” after Haussmann’s surgery, though perhaps it is now a little stupid in its

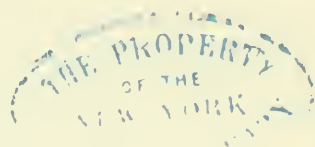


uniformity and lacking in a former charm of color. New York, under the "plan" of 1811, was for many years a dull collection of checker-board squares until the change in the sky line made by the tall buildings and the bridges relieved its monotony. That plan was as bad as, presumably, any new one is good; but it is not desirable to have too much regularity if the city is to be interesting and beautiful.

And what is to make the new city beautiful if we do away with so many of the art features of the past? The green parks seem destined to destruction by congestion of population and plant-food poisoning; isles of safety, drinking fountains, statues, lamps, signs, and all the small art of the older city seem to lack in carrying power; an effect of composition by the grouping of buildings, such as one saw at the Columbian Exposition, or such as is now becoming apparent with less formality in the placing of Columbia University, seems possible only in isolated spots because of the item of expense. What then is the new beauty of the city to be? Wherein shall lie the secret of its outer attractiveness?

Those questions are for the future to answer; and yet an inclination is apparent, an example has been set. The scale of the new city has been established in majestic proportions. The high buildings and the huge bridges are its measure. The future aqueducts, railways, tunnels, boulevards, avenues, squares, circles, will have to conform







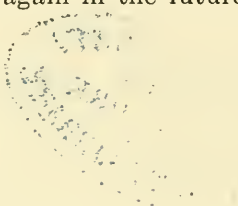
PL. 83. — FOUNTAIN ON RIVERSIDE DRIVE

to the established scale. Out of this shall come something in grandeur as yet quite uncomprehended. The possibilities of the new architecture are the possibilities of the new city. Not the size of it alone, not its mass, shall be its sole impressive feature. There is no limit to the forms that may be evolved, the groupings and mid-air compositions that may be brought into existence, the lights and shadows that may be thus created. The bridges already have grace of line, and the buildings commanding height. That which is to come will be no less impressive.

To gigantic form must be added the further possibility of color. Heretofore it has been used only in spots, but there is now something more than a chance of its use in large masses. The opportunity offered by the bridges suggests it, and some of the sky-scrapers already realize it. With walls that are used only as fire or weather shields, the architect is not pinned down to stone or brick. Almost any material and almost any stain or hue may be made available. Given the high buildings in different colorings, with those colorings shown not only in full sunlight but under shadow, and one can imagine a picturesque effect more imposing than any that has ever gone before us in the world's history.

This would be an expression of municipal art in terms of commercialism and possibly objectionable to some for that very reason. But why? A city should grow

up and out of its necessities, and assert itself and its character in what guise or garb it needs or craves. Rome expressed itself in one kind of art, Paris in quite another kind. Shall the great port of the west not express itself in still another? More than once has commerce out of its objects of use created (perhaps unconsciously) objects of beauty. The beauty comes with the integrity of the use and the frank avowal of the purpose. It has been so in the past and there is no reason to believe that it will not be so again in the future.







PL. 84. — SOLDIERS' MONUMENT, RIVERSIDE DRIVE

FOR MERE CULTURE







PL. XXII.—UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK







## CHAPTER XXII

### FOR MERE CULTURE

NEW YORK has outgrown, or is outgrowing, its smaller art, but it must not be thought that this has been boxed up and sent to the junk shop or the warehouse. On the contrary, it is still in place, and the bulk of it is treasured and admired. Every little angle of green grass is considered an emerald in the city's girdle, every statue is, more or less, a title of distinction, and almost every marble temple or terra-cotta palace doing service as a bank or an office, is pointed at with pride. And not without some show of reason, for much of it is good, even though wrongly conceived and badly placed. For instance:—

The marble bank building on Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street is a very respectable classic edifice which, if placed on a Roman hill, or even a Brooklyn height, might look rather commanding; but what does it on Fifth Avenue, surrounded by sky-scraper, squeezed into a lot much too small for it, with its approach, and even its steps, cut off by the sidewalk? The Clearing House on Cedar Street is not a bad imperial arch, but there is no vista through it, no approach for it, and no part of it is in

focus because of the narrowness of the street. This last statement is true again of the Chamber of Commerce in Liberty Street, with its statues of Jay, Hamilton, and Clinton perched on the façade, or the Stock Exchange on Broad Street, with its sculptured figures in the pediment seen chiefly in detached feet and hands that project over the ledge. Both buildings are distorted in their placings, wanting in perspective, and ineffective, though a zeal for art inspired them.

Some of the new buildings, however, have fared better — the Public Library, for instance. It has sufficient frontage and depth, and can be seen from Fifth Avenue, though it would look more attractive in a larger frame. Commercialism did not dictate either its style or its size. It was built quite as much for beauty as for service, and the citizens of New York seem well pleased that it is beautiful. Everyone looks at it with pleasure as he passes by. Art, more than patriotism, also dictated the clean-cut Washington Arch farther down the avenue, small as it now appears, and perhaps had more to do with the building of Madison Square Garden than considerations of box-office receipts. Some of the purely commercial ventures on Fifth Avenue have paid the highest tribute possible for them to the æsthetics of architecture, as, for examples, the Tiffany and Gorham buildings — both of them excellent in design. As for the new business places, and even some of the West Side

factories, they, with club-houses like the University and the Metropolitan, and the recently built residences along the avenues and the side streets, unite in proclaiming a desire for art if not always its fulfillment.

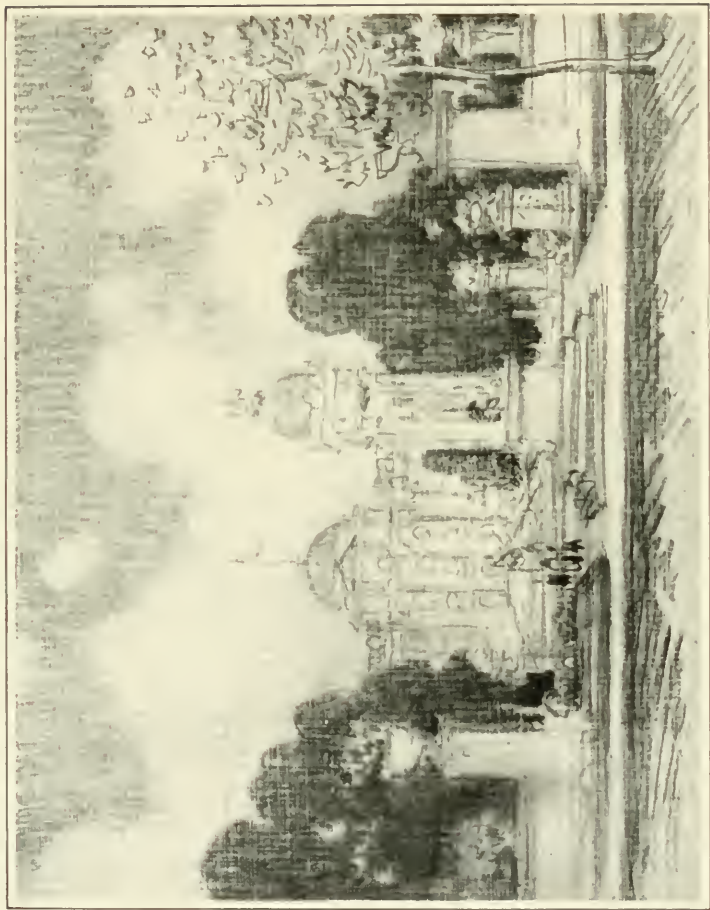
Among the detached sculpture in the parks and streets, bad as much of it always was, and insignificant as most of it has become, there are still some notable examples which people do not care to forget. Aside from the works of Saint Gaudens, there is the "Nathan Hale" of MacMonnies in City Hall Park, Browne's fine statue of "Washington" in Union Square (the first equestrian statue cast in America), the "Hunt Memorial" by French on the east wall of the Central Park, Ward's "Pilgrim" within the park. There is no taint of trade about such works. Even the artless effigies in stone and bronze, with the fountains and monuments which are strewn promiscuously about the city, do not speak of profits and percentages. Good or bad, they were put forth in a proper spirit, not for gain, but in desire of beauty.

But the fancy for the things of art goes beyond a statue in the park, or a classic lamp-post on the avenue. There is the huge Metropolitan Museum, full of art-plunder to the doors, which shows a sense of acquisition if not perhaps the most critical judgment. The Metropolitan is not only the one famous museum in America, but, by virtue of its valuable contents, is fast becoming of world importance. It has money endowments, many wealthy

patrons, and is continually enlarging its collections and extending its usefulness. In such circumstances it cannot fail as a dominant factor in the art-education of the people. That New Yorkers enjoy it and profit by it is evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of visitors that go to it. It is, all told, the most popular place in the city.

There are many other semi-public collections of marbles, pictures, porcelains, and antiquities in the city, such as those of the New York Historical Society, or the Lenox Library, or the City Hall; but all of these put together do not equal the quantities of fine art in the New York houses. There are hundreds of galleries of pictures, with bronzes, fabrics, and furniture, in individual hands, which do educational service in a quiet way among coteries of friends. These collections are famous for their pictures by the Fontainebleau-Barbizon painters, for Manet and Monet, for old Dutch and Flemish painters, for old masters of Italy and Spain. The purchase of these works has, in recent years, set the European art markets agog. Almost every masterpiece that turns up in the auction room is bid in for New York, until Europe has cried out against the draining of its resources. But pictures, marbles, tapestries, porcelains, furniture, medals, plate, rugs, keep coming to this port. The result is that New York has become the great art market of the world. The galleries of the dealers are on almost every block of





PL. 85. — NEW YORK BOTANICAL MUSEUM, BRONX PARK



middle Fifth Avenue, and the trade in antiquities (even forged ones) has become very large.

The city is not only the chief market for foreign art, but it is the chief center of domestic production. Here are located not only the museums, but the societies like the National Academy of Design, the New York Water Color Club, the American Water Color Society, the Architectural League, the Society of Decorative Art. Here also are the art schools of the National Academy, the Art Students' League, the Cooper Union, and many others. There are upwards of ten thousand artists in the city, working in their professions, making a living by various art industries; and thousands of other people are interested with them in exhibiting, or explaining, or selling their work. If all these various manifestations of artistic interest were added together, one might be pardoned for thinking of New York as a new Athens or Florence on the shore of this western world.

And what about the interest in music and the drama? Is there any other city, except possibly Berlin, that supports, as New York does, two (three, if we include the old Academy) opera-houses, half a dozen conservatories of music, two dozen musical societies, and thirty musically inclined churches? Perhaps there is not such a universal love for the art as these comprehensive figures would imply. New York is not so musically set as Dresden or

Vienna or Buda-Pesth. Many thousands of its people care little for it; and yet the fact remains that the best musicians and singers come here, the best operas, oratorios, and chamber-music are given here, and perhaps as good orchestral music as the age is capable of is heard here. True enough, there are plenty of so-called music halls that beat out sentimental arias to please people of crude tastes; but the better New York, even though submerged to the neck in business, still has ears left for Wagner or Richard Strauss or Debussy.

And it always had eyes for the theater — that great modern educator of those who “never have time to read.” There are some fifty or sixty theaters in the borough of Manhattan where something is being performed every evening, and several afternoons of the week — the last but not the least of these to come forward being the new Endowed Theater on Central Park West, which is dedicated to the highest ideals of the drama. Lest this large number of playhouses give the impression that the city has gone daft on amusements, or turned completely over to the Evil One, as some would have it, it is worth while stating that in the borough of Manhattan there are also twelve hundred churches where the Gospel is preached to some half million of people. However much New Yorkers may be devoted to dollar-getting, they have time and inclination for the play and the sermon.

New York makes money out of science by applying

it in industry, and does it very cleverly too; yet it spends large sums in exploiting pure science with no money thought back of the endeavor. Look at the magnificent Museum of Natural History with its famous collections; or the wonderful Botanical Garden in the Bronx with its laboratories, herbarium, libraries, and thousands of living plants; or the Aquarium at the Battery, the largest and most complete in the world, not excepting the famous Aquario of Naples; or even the "Zoo" in the Bronx, where the grown-ups go quite as frequently as the children! Half of the learned societies and scientific associations and engineering clubs in the country have their homes in New York. Here new discoveries are demonstrated in the laboratory and explained from the lecture platform; here new theories are discussed by societies, and the discussions published in the journals of their proceedings; here new hypotheses in mechanics, electrics, microscopies, or any other phase of pure science are formulated. Even the fields of discussion in geology, ethnology, political and ethical science, or the more abstruse philosophy of religion with its theological corollaries, are here.

Let us go a little farther and see what this city of trade is doing for general education—doing for mere culture. It is the great center of the New World for the printing and publishing of newspapers and magazines. There are in the greater city fifty-two daily and ninety-

six weekly newspapers, with eighty or more magazines. Among these are the best newspapers and periodicals in the country. They are issued in all languages, and contain enough miscellaneous information to make a good-sized encyclopædia; but vast as is their influence in education, the average business man in New York does not take them too seriously. He looks them over, reading an article here and there. He has, however, a more abiding interest in books. They are articles of trade, like the newspapers; but New York is well disposed to value them as matters of culture, too. Its many public libraries and their liberal support bear witness to this spirit. Aside from the large library on Fifth Avenue, to contain the Astor, Tilden, and Lenox foundations, aside from the fifty or sixty Carnegie branches of it, there are over fifty other public or semi-public libraries in Manhattan, containing hundreds of thousands of books, on all subjects, and almost every one of them free to readers. This does not include the libraries of the many clubs or private schools or colleges or societies, where admission is obtained only by card.

This publishing of many periodicals and books in New York results in the city being well supplied with editors and authors. At one time Boston had the distinction of being the home of American writers, but to-day New York may be considered the great gathering place. They come from all over the United States, drawn by the

intellectual advantages of the city, and in spite of its (to them) rather repellent commerce and wealth. They gather at clubs like the Century and the Authors, where with painters, sculptors, architects, lawyers, and public men generally, they create an atmosphere of their own which is sometimes described in magazine articles under such a caption perhaps as "Literary New York." That atmosphere is a decided influence in the city, though not known on the Stock Exchange nor revealed in any foreigner's three-weeks impressions of the city, written for Continental consumption. Indeed, some of our millionaires are not exempt from it, but a part of it. They may even think that, rather than money, their title to distinction.

Still another step, at the risk of becoming wearisome, to show what this Gotham of dollars-and-cents does for definite and systematic education among its rising generations. Any city may encourage browsing in public libraries or museums, or listening in lecture rooms and theaters; but New York does more than that. It has, for instance, a school system, working thoroughly and efficiently in some six hundred schoolhouses, which, with about ten thousand teachers, is giving a primary education, at least, to some six hundred thousand school children.

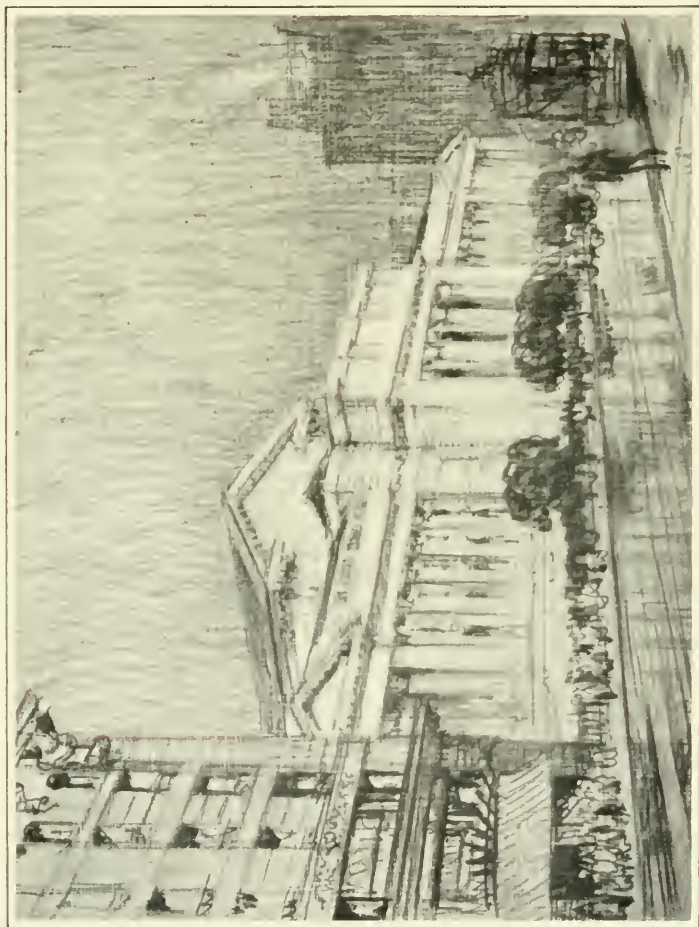
The expense of this is large (about twenty-nine millions of dollars a year), and it is no trivial test of New



York's desire for knowledge for its children that it supports this expense without complaint. Furthermore, it insists that all children in the city between the ages of eight and fourteen shall attend, — shall receive the equipment of a common-school education, at least. To enforce this requirement it employs thirty or more attendance officers whose duty it is to bring in the delinquents. For those who cannot attend in the daytime there are night schools; and all winter there are lecture courses in the schoolhouses, on almost every conceivable subject, free to anyone who will come, parents as well as children. Any student who wishes to go higher than the public schools has the opportunity of doing so. There are a dozen high schools, a normal college for women, and the city college for men, with industrial schools of various kinds and descriptions. There is practically no limit to what the ambitious youth may attain in education; and that, too, without cost.

The number of private schools in the city would be difficult to estimate; but in Manhattan there are at least fifty (some of them with local and some with national reputations), where a secondary education is taught to thousands of pupils. Many of these schools prepare for college, and New York has a goodly number of institutions of collegiate rank. There is Columbia University to start with — one of the largest and best in the United States. It was founded before the Revolution, and its





PL. 86. — PUBLIC LIBRARY, FIFTH AVENUE

1872  
JAN 10  
1872

beginnings, with six professors and a handful of students, were extremely modest, as were those of New York itself; but to-day it has nearly seven hundred instructors on its faculty list and, with its adjuncts, Barnard and Teachers colleges, and its schools of law and medicine, over eight thousand students. Its student body is made up from all nationalities, from all quarters of the world, and the subjects taught include almost everything dreamed of in the science of pedagogics. It is a great university, and it has a very positive influence upon New York life, notwithstanding the common belief that the city is only amenable to the persuasion of business.

Next to Columbia comes New York University with several thousand students and its group of fine buildings on University Heights; and not far away is the College of the City of New York (with several thousand more students), newly equipped and newly housed on Washington Heights. These are the principal colleges, and yet there might be others mentioned, like St. John's College and St. Francis Xavier, with many professional schools of high rank. There are several important theological seminaries and law schools, with colleges of medicine, of dentistry, of pharmacy, and the like, outside of the universities proper. Besides these there are postgraduate schools, correspondence schools, summer schools, university-extension schools, trade and training schools. In fact, if one had the actual statistics for all the educational doings in the

city they would go far in bolstering up an argument to prove that New York was school mad.

The professional and trade schools, like the business colleges that flourish on every block, are more or less designed to fit the student for money-making; but the bulk of the study in New York is, perhaps, more for culture than for commerce. At any rate, a large part of it is never used as a means of gain, but rather as a means of understanding and appreciating life. There are plenty of people in New York who think in terms of philosophy though engaged most of their time in details of trade. Gaining a livelihood is not incompatible with living intellectually, and knowing how to figure out a commission does not necessarily mean an ignorance of everything else in existence.

But the world does not care to consider statistics of education, nor does it like the revising of its opinions. It made up its mind long ago that New York was a business center; and, success in one department usually arguing failure in every other department, it followed, naturally enough, that New York was, outside of business, a woful ignoramus. A reputation, whether deserved or not, is a difficult thing to get rid of. No matter how much London or Paris may grow in grace or change in appearance, its reputation for ugliness or beauty, for dirt or cleanliness, for piety or wickedness, goes right on in the rut of a hundred years ago. Chicago, for example,



PL. 87. — COLLEGE OF CITY OF NEW YORK

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY

has the name of being a sordid spot of earth with a packing-house soul, a wheat-pit mind, and a taste for things of magnitude rather than of quality; but one wonders just what percentage of its people are so constituted. Is Chicago, as a whole, more avid of the dollar than any other city, here or elsewhere? Has it less taste than Cincinnati, or more love of the grandiose than San Francisco? Again, Boston's proximity to Harvard has given it the name of being our first city in culture, as Philadelphia's connection with the early government of the country has established its reputation for family traditions; but is it a fact that Boston always asks: What do you know? or Philadelphia: Who were your grand-parents? Are not such questions asked occasionally in every city of the country?

By the same rumor-tongue the stranger in New York is told that the only inquiry made here is as to the extent of one's wealth; but, outside of the business world, how many people ask that question seriously? And, when asked, how many people care about what answer is given? Is it not a fact that many a prominent citizen in New York, many a highly esteemed leader in science, literature, or the public service, is remarkable for poverty rather than riches? Even in the smart world of fashionable society there are scores of people who have no money to speak of, and yet are welcomed for their manners or their taste or their mentality. In fact, fashionable society,



and the man in the street who perhaps is not society in any sense, join in admiration of the poor man, especially if he is a person of intellectual and moral quality. And, by way of contrast, who does not know his group of millionaires in the city who are absolutely ignored in the city's life — people who have nothing to their credit but a bank account, and who never rise to any position whatever?

The truth is that in those things that stand for American ideals or their absence, New York is not very different from any other city in the United States. It has Boston's culture, and Philadelphia's longing after immortality through ancestor worship, only trebled and quadrupled numerically. It has also Chicago's wheat-pit mind and love of sheer bigness, but once more the disposition is doubly intensified by numbers. None of these cities have been exactly reputed, for the single sentence that is supposed to epitomize is always extravagant in statement. The cities have good, bad, and indifferent qualities, all mixed together; and, like the average American citizen, they are perhaps neither very good nor yet very bad, but of a middle quality. New York is larger and contains more possibilities for good and for evil than the others — that is about the only difference.





PL. 88. — HALL OF FAME, UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



THE ISLANDS





PL. XXIII.—COVERNORS ISLAND

Бл. XXIII. COVERINGS ISLAND







## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE ISLANDS

IF New York has little repute as a city of culture, it has perhaps still less as a city of brotherly love. Its head may be thought shrewd enough in business matters, but whoever accused the city of having a heart or a soul? Who, for instance, thinks of it as wasting any effort or energy on the unfortunate, the unsuccessful, the incompetent? The prevalent belief is that those who cannot swim go down in the big maelstrom, and no one in the city puts out a hand to save them. But, once more, the prevalent belief is wrong.

It is doubtful if any other city in the world does as much for humanity through goodness of heart as this same city of New York. Its charities are extraordinary in their number and their extent. The *New York Charities Directory*, which contains a classified and descriptive list of the philanthropic, educational, and religious resources of the city, is a six-hundred-page volume entirely filled with the addresses and officers of the various institutions. Tolman and Hemstreet's *Better New York* is a three-hundred-page book giving the places where help of one sort

or another is obtainable. From it one gathers the impression that there is hardly a block in the city that does not contain a place of refuge of some name and nature for the sick, the weary, or the out-of-work. This is all more or less organized charity, administered by societies, or by the city itself. Add to it the giving and the helping not put down in books, the good-intentioned efforts of thousands of people in an individual capacity, and the charity work of the city takes on vast proportions. It seems as though almost every other person in the city was being helped, or "uplifted," or given "a chance" for life and happiness.

That much of this charity is mistaken in purpose and does more harm than good may be quite true. Half the cities in the country, by their indiscriminate charity, have pauperized their poorer citizens, just as half the cities themselves have been pauperized by the gifts of millionaires. The proper way to help humanity is not to feed it, clothe it, and carry its burdens, but to insist upon its helping itself. However, that is not matter for present discussion. The point that would be made is that New York, foolishly or otherwise, gives to charity in figures that are almost incredible; helps the needy with more hands than a Hindu god; and does it through pure kindness of heart, through sympathetic feeling for humanity — a wish to make others better and happier.

It must not be inferred from this that all New York's helping is of a foolish and unconsidered nature. On the





PL. 89. — BEDLOE'S ISLAND — STATUE OF LIBERTY

contrary, the bulk of it is carefully planned and exactly carried out in accordance with the best sociological principles. The sick and disabled are always to be looked after, cost what it may, and consequently the hospital is always a necessity; but its management is to be economic as well as therapeutic. Just so with the criminal and vicious classes, the insane, the foundlings, the aged, the crippled. They must be housed in jails or penitentiaries, prisons or asylums, homes or retreats; but while liberality must prevail the cost is to be exactly counted, and the results obtained are to be accurately reported. This is not a matter of charity alone, but of government, of the best municipal administration.

One expects scientific management in the large hospitals, of which the borough of Manhattan has some seventy-five or more — some of them endowed, and many of them administered by trustee boards composed of prominent citizens. They command the best surgical and medical talent in the land, and they are more or less free to patients of any race or color. Such institutions as St. Luke's, Roosevelt, the New York, the J. Hood Wright Memorial, the Presbyterian hospitals, need neither apology nor description; they are famed for their excellence.

Bellevue and the various hospitals on Blackwell's Island belong to the city, belong in the Department of Public Charities, and are just as efficiently administered as the Roosevelt or Presbyterian types in Manhattan.

The visitor to them will find little that he may take exception to. The buildings answer their purpose well, the service is efficient, the machinery the most modern. There are homœopathic as well as allopathic hospitals, maternity and tuberculosis hospitals, alcoholic and nervous-disease hospitals, with hospitals for the incurables and convalescent, and a training school for nurses.

The efficiency shown in these city hospitals is carried out in the other institutions on Blackwell's Island. The workhouse is large, clean, and decent; the asylums are comfortable and commodious; and as for the penitentiary with its twelve hundred inmates, it is healthful, sanitary, and orderly in every way. That much is to be said also for the institutions farther up the river, where the delinquents and the young degenerates are housed, taught to work, and, in measure, reformed.

The islands where these institutions are located are in summer the coolest and the greenest spots in the city, and at any season they are beautiful in their settings. All of which puts the notion into one's head that the city has given up to its crippled and aged, its thugs and thieves, its paupers and prisoners, the most livable and lovable portions of the town, keeping for itself only some flat and rather hot districts on the upper avenues. This looks like a great deal of self-denial in favor of the outcast; but, unfortunately, the motive will not bear critical analysis. It is to be feared that the New Yorkers put the prisoners and

the paupers on the islands because no one else wanted those spots. They were waste places that could be spared very readily; and besides, over there "the slovenly unhand-some corse" could not come betwixt the wind and the nobility. People do not want their public institutions too close to them.

As for islands near a city, they have never been popular resorts, except for picnic parties. Humanity of the hermit variety occasionally exists upon them; but the true city-dweller is a person of gregarious tastes and loves to flock along a dusty street rather than a water front. Moreover, the islands are inaccessible, hard to come and go from, and, also, they are "dreadfully lonely." But they are good healthful places for the indigent and the aged, and admirable spots in which to bring sinners to repentance. Hence their appropriateness for prisons and hospitals. Let the blind and the halt have them. So long as the free citizen can smell gasoline and see asphalt on Fifth Avenue, he will not miss the sea breezes and green grass of the islands.

The New York people have always been leaving the best places behind them in their rush for the spot that is for the moment the most frequented or fashionable. In the ancient days they abandoned the Battery, one of the finest residential sites in the city, to crowd around City Hall Park and Warren Street. Then they retreated, step by step, along the shopways and avenues, from Bleecker Street through Union and Madison squares and Bryant

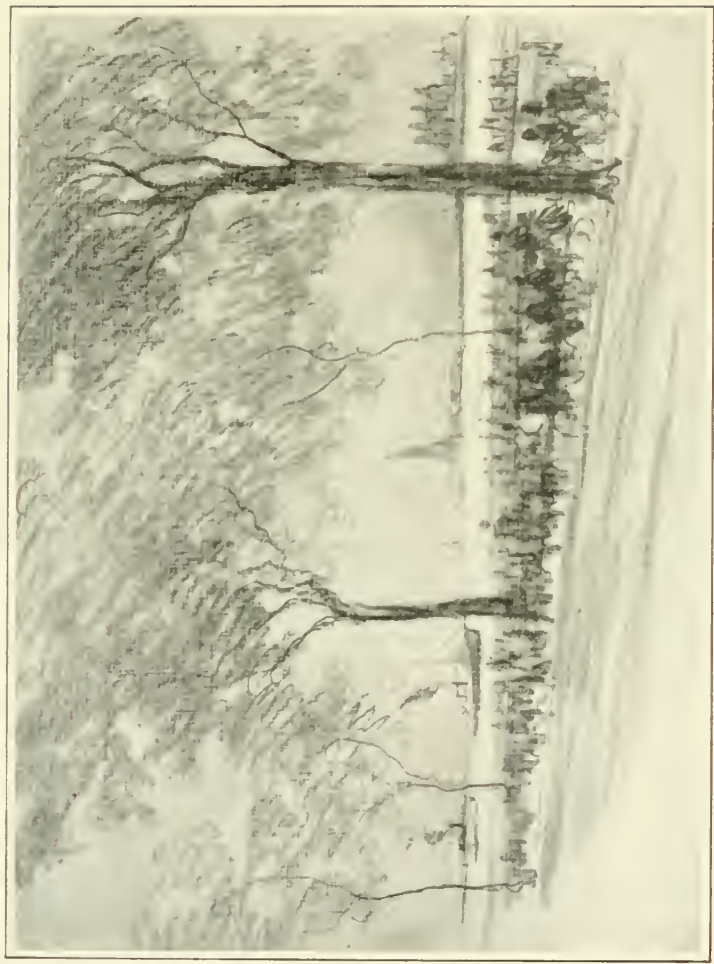


Park to the Central Park, where for the moment they are pausing to catch breath. As for the Riverside Drive, it has been recently discovered, and declared beautiful; but many people think it "quite impossible" as a place of residence because one's friends will not come out there to call! Morningside Park, again, is pretty, good enough for a group of college buildings to face upon, or for a Harlem promenade, but much too far from the Plaza.

Such fancies have bothered New Yorkers in the past, and are doing so to-day. Under the circumstances it is not to be wondered at that no one wants the islands, and that they have been given over to various undesirable citizens who are kept in more or less restraint by a water front and a stone wall. Instead of being parked and used by the public, like the beautiful Margarethen-Insel at Buda-Pesth, they have been utilized and rendered forbidding by the city or national government. Up the river following the prisons and asylums there is a decent little island doing service as a potter's field, and not far from it, on another island, the city is building a veritable mountain out of street refuse. Down the bay the smaller islands are given over to immigrants and quarantine patients, or guns and forts, or smells and factories.

It is something of a disgrace to New York in general, and the borough of Richmond in particular, that Staten Island, altogether the most beautifully located ground in or about the greater city, should be almost surrounded





PL. 90. — ISLANDS FROM THE BATTERY



at its water's edge by smoke-belching factories. No one wishes to question the value and necessity of factories, even though they do smoke and smell disagreeably; but why have them at the harbor entrance where all the world comes in or goes out? And why should they occupy the most attractive site in the greater city when there are so many other places that would answer their purpose just as well?

Of course, these factories go along with the commerce of the port and contribute to it, and on gray days they are picturesque enough with their tall chimneys trailing steam and smoke into the mist; but some of the residents of Staten Island would gladly exchange the profits and the pictures they make for less soot and a clearer air. As it is, another kind of exchange is being made. Many of the inhabitants are moving away, and to-day, on the west side of the island, one may see deserted mansions with sagging roofs, leaning columns, and broken windows, the very paint being eaten from them by the smoke-gases of oil and chemical factories coming from across the Kill von Kull and Arthur Kill.

But for this almost complete circle of nuisances Staten Island would be an ideal spot for suburban residences, for little towns, perhaps for a great city. In its extreme length it is thirteen miles and in its greatest width eight miles, there being, all told, some sixty square miles of it. It is greatly diversified by hills, some of them four hundred

feet high; and from their ridges and summits wonderful views are obtained. To the east is the Narrows with the Upper and Lower bays, and all that that implies in passing ships and sails. Here the transatlantic steamers, the coasters, the schooners, the round-the-Horn ships come and go all day long. Far out, beyond Sandy Hook and the light-ship, the black smoking funnels and the gray sails can be seen rising from the sea as they come or sinking below the verge as they go. Over the Narrows, over Coney Island, over Long Island, the view extends; but ever the eyes keep returning to the distant sea, the trail of smoke, the glint of sails along the rim. To the south are the hills of Navesink and the low shores of New Jersey, to the west the marshes, and to the northeast the distant New York.

The interior of Staten Island is one of the most positive contrasts one can meet with in the greater city. It is difficult to realize that the woods and ponds, the farms and gardens and country places, that one sees over there, are really a part of New York. It is like a country district in the Mohawk Valley, with plowed fields, meadows, cattle, and timbered hilltops. The woods and fields are not trimmed or swept or bridle-pathed or terraced or laid out for tennis and golf. It is not a park; it is what is left of primeval nature. Daisies are growing in the lowlands, violets are blooming along the wood roads, and wild roses are nodding and bending along the fences. The brooks



PL. 91.—STATEN ISLAND FACTORIES

THE PROPERTY OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO  
LIBRARY

find their own way to the sea, the squirrels hunt their own provender, and the song birds build their nests quite unobserved.

For not a great many people penetrate into the interior of Staten Island. It is the borough of Richmond and has something more than seventy thousand inhabitants; but New Yorkers hardly yet regard it as part of the city, because it is five miles from the Battery and has to be reached by a ferry-boat, time twenty-two minutes. Occasionally the man in the motor goes chasing through it at breakneck speed, seeing nothing except the signboards of the automobile club; but those who come over to the island for a quiet stroll along the wood roads and through the fields are very few. The city dweller likes to think about such things when reading his evening paper by the fire, and to hear him talk on occasion one might imagine that in the city he was in *durance vile*; but at heart he does not care too much for nature. He likes people better than stumps, and, consequently, takes the suburbs and the islands in homœopathic doses.

Staten Island from a steamer's deck coming up the bay looks almost like fairyland. Everything about it is bright and sparkling, the greenswards of Forts Tompkins and Wadsworth — about as gun proof as so many golf bunkers — are graceful, and the quarantine station seems a haven of refuge cut out of a picture book. Moreover, that part of the island is comparatively free of factories and the air is



passing clear. Even the barren little quarantine islands lying down in the Lower Bay have a romantic or picturesque look seen through that air, and under that brilliant sunlight. Yet, strange to relate, there has always been a fight on hand to keep these islands and waters of the harbor entrance from being polluted or infected or destroyed. At one time scows dumped refuse there; now sewage, factory drainage, and smallpox patients lay claim to them. And still they survive as things of beauty to gladden the eye of the returning traveler and make him proud of his native land.

The islands in the Upper Bay are better known, but not much more frequented than those in the East River. Bedloe's Island catches its daily tale of tourists who go there to see the Statue of Liberty by Bartholdi; but few natives of the city have ever set foot upon it. It used to be a place of execution — a suggestion of how the forefathers of the present citizen regarded the beauty spots in the harbor. Now it is only famous for its statue, which would have looked so much better almost anywhere else. It should have been planted squarely at the extreme end of the Battery, where the ships coming up the harbor could have passed almost under it. Then its colossal proportions would have been like those of an Osiride figure in front of an Egyptian temple—an effective feature in introducing the massive architecture back of it. Placed where it is there is only a mild wonder about its size,



because it is two miles off from the Battery, and a mile or more from the steamer channel.

Governor's Island is a picturesque spot, seen from Brooklyn Heights or the Battery, and yet another place that the citizen leaves undisturbed. The United States government occupies it for military purposes, and admission to it is to be had only by a written pass. It is covered with trees, officers' quarters, parade grounds, and guns. There are some harbor defenses located there, and on the western side is old Castle William, a cheese-box fort made of sandstone, which is now used as a prison, presumably because it is good for nothing else. The island is not a martial-looking camp. To-day it is quite as peaceful as its neighbor, the gunless Battery of bellicose birth.

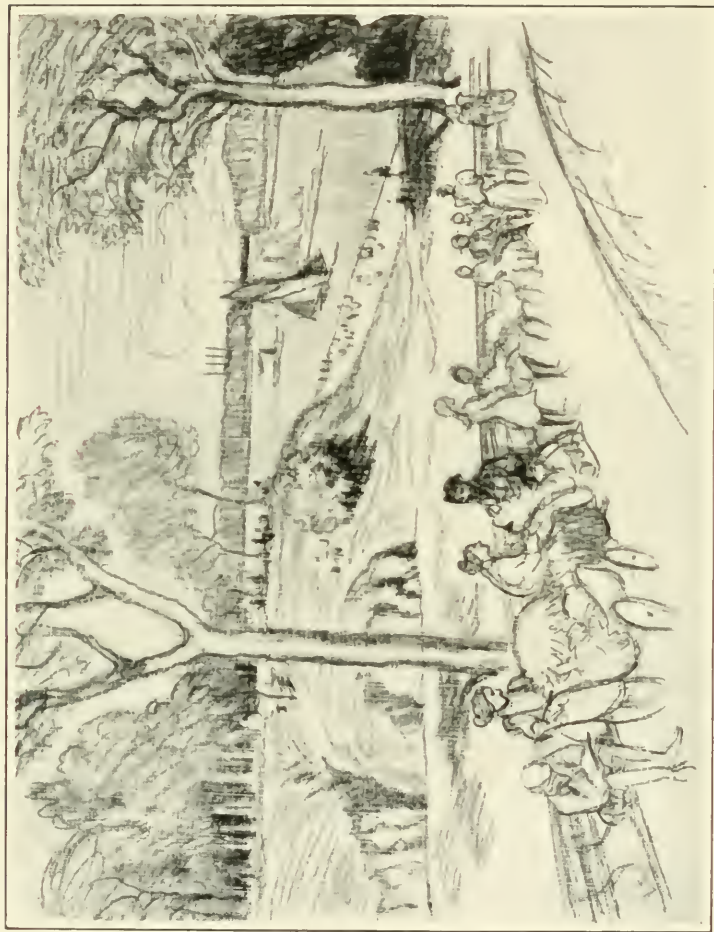
The best known and most frequented of all the islands has not now the slightest characteristic of an island. It is the fag-end of a sand spit pushed out into the Lower Bay, and is called Coney Island <sup>1</sup> possibly because in the memory of man no conies were ever known there or elsewhere in the eastern United States. Originally there was quite a strip of this sand spit extending along the south shore of Long Island and cut here and there by inlets. Now it is divided into different localities with names like Manhattan Beach, Rockaway, and Brighton Beach. The western extremity of it only is known as Coney Island. Years ago it was re-

<sup>1</sup> The Dutch of it was "Conijnen Eylant." The rabbits upon it were doubtless mistaken for conies.

sorted to as a bathing beach, but in more recent times it has passed into a show place where all sorts of freaks and fads are seen and queer spectacular entertainments are given. It is the home of Mardi Gras; it is the Pike, the Midway; and the Great White Way all combined. It nods by day but wakes up at twilight with thousands of electric lights in dazzling forms, and scores of variety shows to please the multitude. Its easy access by railway from New York, and its cool nights in summer, make it a favorite stamping ground for the gilded youth of the city, who go to it in crowds and mobs — sometimes over a hundred thousand a day. But there is nothing very unique about it. Every city of any size has some such place where young heads are for a time made less conscious of their emptiness.

Over in Jamaica Bay to the east of Coney Island there are plenty of genuine islands, belonging to the greater city, that are not doing service of any kind. Eventually these little sand-and-mud areas in the bay may be turned into dock foundations, and a new port for New York built around them; but just now the natives dig clams on them, and hunters in long boots sometimes gun over them for snipes and ducks. They are still in a state of nature, though within the city's limits and not twelve miles from the high ridge of sky-scraper on Lower Broadway.

Always contrasts, contrasts, contrasts. In New York they never seem to cease and determine.



PL. 92. — EAST RIVER ISLANDS FROM JEFFERSON PARK



## THE LARGER CITY





PL. XXIV.—THE ELEVATED ROAD AT ONE HUNDRED AND  
TWENTY-FIFTH STREET







8th Avenue Station 1906



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE LARGER CITY

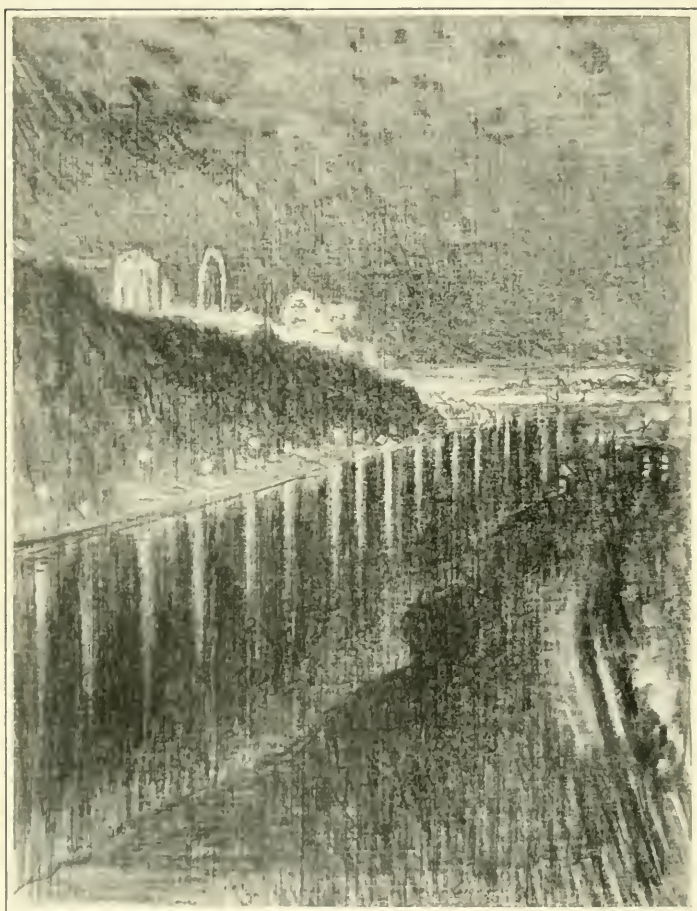
ALMOST everyone in New York who goes to business in the morning and returns somewhere to dine and sleep in the evening, has his separate tale of woe to tell about the annoyances of urban travel. If he lives up town, along the line of the subway or the elevated, he hangs by a strap for three-quarters of an hour in going and coming; if he commutes from Yonkers or beyond, he is held up for valuable time in the tunnel or at the Harlem River; if he lives over in Brooklyn, he is squeezed night and morning in the bridge and tube jams; if he comes from across the Hudson, he is continually missing his boat. Staten Island is quite unattainable, and the back districts of Queens are not to be thought of. Rapid transit is a necessity, but somehow not yet a comfortable reality. Moving to and from the centers of business is still a vexation and an annoyance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The report of the Public Service Commission of New York gives the proportions of this transit question in startling figures. The surface, elevated, and subway companies of New York City in 1908 carried 1,300,000 passengers, or an average of 3,561,643 passengers a day. This is 66 per cent more than the total of passengers carried by all the steam railroads in the United States. Twenty per cent of this travel takes place in a single "rush" hour, which accounts for the crowding of the cars.

This comes about from the island nature of Manhattan. There is water on three sides of it and a ridge of ground leading out on the fourth side. The man who travels to business has his choice of taking to the water or the ridge. Neither way furnishes him with very rapid transit, because the one is not easily skimmed over, and the other is always choked with people. And so for years he has been fretting and fuming over the difficulty in "getting to the office," as he expresses it. It is all very well to boast about the greater city with its dozens of towns, its three hundred or more square miles, and its homes for everybody; but how is one to reach them from the lower city? Legislative enactment put these outlying districts under one name and government, thinking to draw them closer about Manhattan; but they are still lacking in facility of communication, in unity, in cohesiveness.

If one considers the City Hall as the hub of the city, and draws a thirty-mile rim about it to include the metropolitan districts, it becomes at once apparent that what the whole wheel needs is more spokes. That would not only make the hub and the rim accessible, but unify and strengthen the entire structure. It is not necessary that the spokes should spread out upon the surface in new avenues and streets. The Baron Haussmann extravagance of cutting wide boulevards through the heart of Paris could hardly be repeated in New York; and if it were, the new routes along the ridge, while improving the situation, would help





PL. 93. FORT GEORGE BY NIGHT

travel in practically only one direction. They would act indirectly as feeders to the bridge entrances, and in that way perhaps facilitate traffic in another direction, yet still leave much to be desired. Surface transit has its decided limitations.

As for the East River bridges themselves, when they are all in working order, with their wide exits and entrances and their through trains, they will reach the Brooklyn side of the city quite effectively. But what will they do for travel to the far regions of Queens or Kings? The Manhattan Bridge, with its broad avenue to the sea, will furnish a speedway for automobiles only, the surface roads do not represent rapid transit in any modern sense, and the elevated roads are not (or should not be) permanent lines of travel. And yet the need for rapid transit to the outer edge of the circle and beyond is a very real one. The poor man (barring the East Sider who loves his close quarters and cannot be induced to go to the country) wants cheaper rent, more air, and more play ground for his children; the rich man wants more room too, with less noise and dust and hurry. Almost everyone wishes to get out on the score of health and expense but is kept in by the score of time. The uppermost question is one of the time-table. How many minutes does it take to reach a given place? If it takes forty-five minutes to go to Harlem and only thirty minutes to Flushing or Montclair, then the half-hour districts will receive the commuter majority.

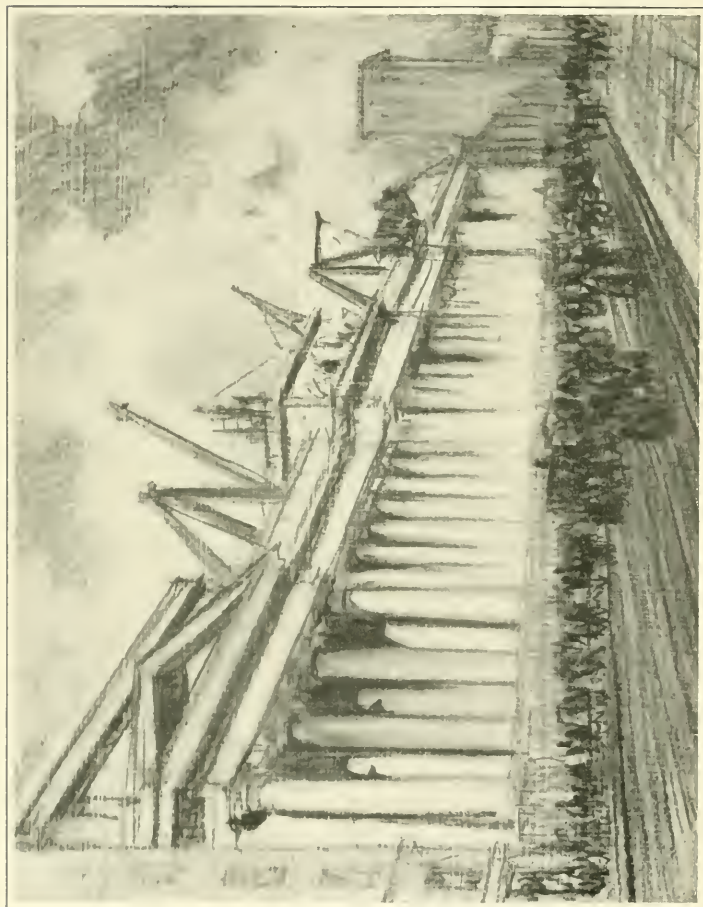


This is not theory but fact — fact in process of demonstration at the present time, as it has been for thirty years or more. In the early seventies, with only horse-cars on the side avenues, it required an hour or more to go from down town to Forty-Second Street; and during snow storms there were often several days of suspended animation, except for foot-passengers. Washington Square, lower Fifth Avenue, University and Irving places were then the residence districts, and Fifty-Ninth Street was the outside limit. At that time thousands of people lived out of town, thirty miles or more up the Hudson or over in New Jersey or Long Island, because it was easier to reach those regions by railway than upper New York by horse-car.

But a swift change came with the building of the Sixth Avenue elevated road in 1878. That made possible the reaching of Forty-Second Street from the Battery in, say, forty minutes at the most. The response from the outside districts to this invitation was immediate. The suburbanites flocked into the city, located themselves along the line of the elevated, and hung by straps morning and evening for a number of years in comparative content. Upper New York to Harlem and beyond was built up with houses, apartments, and hotels, so great was the inward rush of people wishing to live within three-quarters of an hour of the business district. Naturally the capacity of the elevated soon became taxed to the utmost. Electri-



LIBRARY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
HISTORY SOCIETY



PL. 94.—PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD STATION (IN CONSTRUCTION)

fying the road, and running express trains night and morning, helped but did not fully meet the situation. Finally the subway was built, which furnished relief again. But now even the subway is overcrowded. Moreover, by its overcrowding, its time-making capacity has been reduced, and thus the very object of its building (rapid transit) has been, not defeated, but incompletely realized.

Yet once again relief has been furnished, and continues in process of being furnished. The subway has been extended under the East River to Brooklyn, the McAdoo tunnels have been opened under the Hudson into New Jersey. It is now easier and quicker traveling to Long Island or New Jersey than to Harlem or the Bronx, and much cheaper living there than in upper Manhattan. Once more the adaptable flat-dweller and whilom suburbanite has responded to the new opportunity. He has no particular pride of place or love of locality. He is a business man and wants the machinery of his life to produce the best results with the least waste of energy. So he has gone out half-an-hour's ride to the Oranges or Flatbush or Jamaica. The result is that the strain upon the up-town roads is temporarily relieved; the percentage of gain is now in favor of the suburbs rather than upper Manhattan; the tunnels are working admirably in readjusting the load, as well as accommodating the people with swift service.

Inevitably in a city like New York the hurrying crowd will follow the shortest and most direct route. It will not

go around if it can cut across, and it will not waste time if it can save it. Rapid transit is something it cannot get on without and continue to transact business in the lower city. It seems impossible to secure quick service on the surface. The ferry-boats are moribund, the street railways are for local traffic only; even the bridges are comparatively speaking "short-haul" affairs, taking up considerably more time than the average person wishes to give. As for the elevated, it served its purpose for many years with some efficiency, and a great deal of noise and dirt; but it is now, or soon will be, more of a nuisance than a need. It belongs in the class and to the period of telegraph poles and overhead wires, and should be abolished or put underground. It was never handsome, and it has never been possible to maintain decent streets and houses within the roar and shock of its passing trains. No municipal commission seeking to beautify the city could do much to lessen the ugliness of such a structure crawling through the streets. Eventually it will be taken down because the newer means of transit will outspeed it.

There is very little doubt that the tube is the solution of the suburban and long-distance travel problem. It has been demonstrated that it can be pushed through almost any kind of ground. Water, quicksand, river-silt, solid rock, do not stop it; weather conditions and surface traffic do not touch it; disputed rights of way

and depreciation of property by noise and dust offer no serious menaces. It seems the ideal method of transit in New York because it can be run in any direction. Put our imaginary wheel, with its thirty- or hundred-mile rim, underground, build tubes along the radiating spokes from hub to rim, with exits at the surface wherever needed, and what surface-planned city of the world could equal New York in directness, swiftness, and ease of travel? With such a system the present annoyances of transit would vanish into thin air.

And what a united city, a far-reaching city, would form above those radiating burrows in the ground! The Greater New York which has an area three times that of London and ten times that of Paris, would then be a reality rather than a circle on the map. For people would build along the new lines of travel (just as they have been doing since the world began), and the new city would thus be knit together in a compact whole. Moreover, its future growth for all time would be assured by the mere widening of the rim and the extension of the tunnels. There would practically be no limit to its expansion.

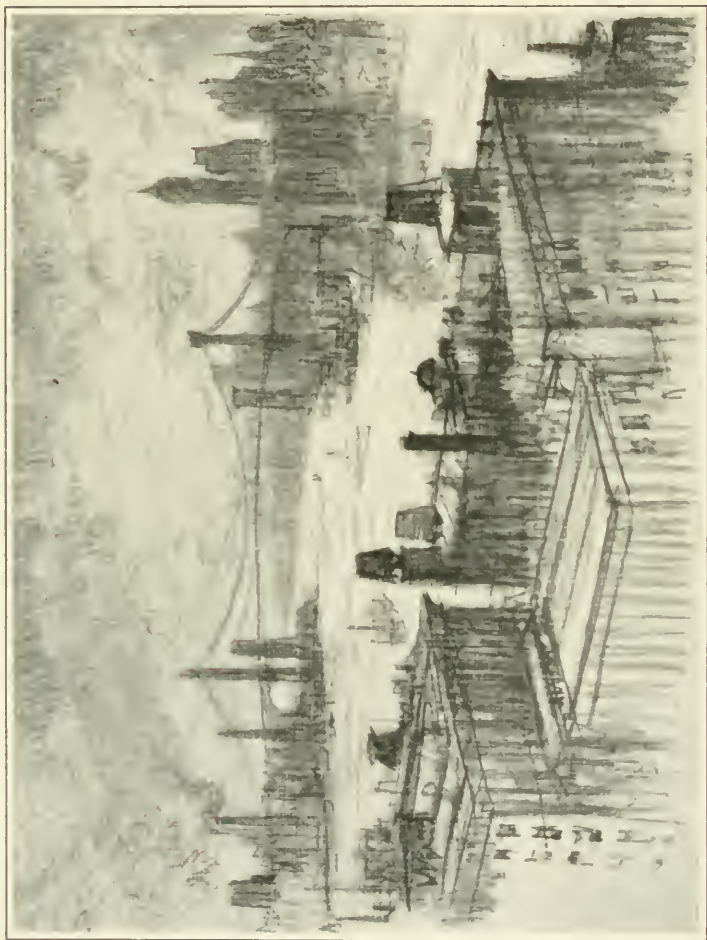
But this plan completed would mean the greatest financial and engineering venture ever undertaken by any community. It is so vast in scale that it sounds fanciful. Many years of time, thousands of human lives, millions upon millions in money, would be required for its accom-

plishment. Probably no one alive to-day would see its complete fulfillment. Yet it is absolutely certain that New York has even now started upon some such plan. It is perhaps groping a little blindly, winding somewhat erratically in its tunnel projects down under the rock and water, not following the exact plan of the spoked wheel; but it will find itself and eventually follow the shortest routes as it has always done. There seems nothing impossible in the venture, not even the money phase of it, which at one time looked rather dark.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the tunnels already pushed through, equipped, and working are the very best proofs of its possibility.

The subway was the first accomplished fact in tunnels. It was opened and operated from the City Hall to One Hundred and Forty-Fifth Street in 1904. The next year it was extended under the Harlem River, into the Bronx, and down town as far as the Battery. Its success was immediate — the demand for it being demonstrated by its use. It has carried as high as nineteen million passengers in a single month, or an average of 633,000 each day. The mere fact that it is so crowded (the trains follow each other almost like the buckets in a grain elevator) is something of an argument for its speed and its comfort, as well as its necessity. The express trains average thirty miles an hour, the local trains some-

<sup>1</sup> Legislative restrictions in the granting of public franchises to private parties seemed to check new tunnel enterprises during 1908, and thereafter; but there has recently been renewed activity.





PL. 95. EAST RIVER FROM WILLIAMSBURGH BRIDGE



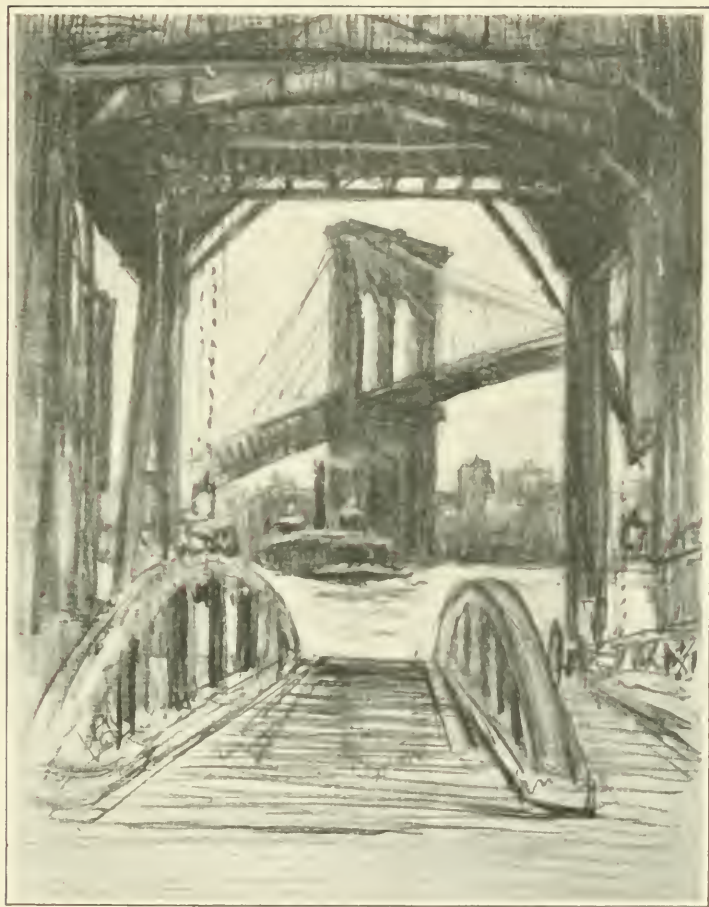


what less. The roadbed is excellent and the steel cars are commodious, notwithstanding they are often overcrowded by standing people. The air of the tunnel is hardly the free breath of heaven, but it is not discomforting, and, apparently, not unhealthful. Nor are the strident hum of the electric power and the moving-picture flickering of lights along the walls as the train rushes by more than minor annoyances. The passenger soon becomes so accustomed to such sights and sounds that he neither sees nor hears them. Of course the subway lights were never designed as an improvement upon sunshine, nor its electric fans put in to rival ocean breezes. The road is a substitute for an open-air road, and it is a very good substitute, especially in wet or cold weather.

Whenever an extension or connection of the subway is added, passengers immediately pour through it like some suddenly loosed head of water. The Brooklyn extension under the East River was opened in February, 1908, and at once began carrying over one hundred thousand passengers a day. A similar use is sure to follow the projected extensions under Lexington Avenue and on the West Side. The more routes opened the more people there seem ready to use them. New ones are being built as fast as possible; but each year a hundred thousand new people come into the town and the crowd on the waiting platform is always growing.

The Hudson and Manhattan (or McAdoo) tunnels lead to the west under the Hudson River and are enterprises apart from the subway, and yet they are planned to connect with it at various points, and no doubt will eventually become a part of it. There are four tubes in the McAdoo system. Two of them pass down Sixth Avenue from Thirty-Third Street, across the city to the west at Christopher Street, and under the Hudson River to Hoboken, where they are continued down along the various railway stations to Jersey City. The other two tunnels are from the Terminal Building in Cortlandt Street to the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Jersey City. These four tubes are designed to carry a half-million passengers a day, and under stress could probably accommodate many more. Their extensions are planned as far out in New Jersey as Newark; and eventually they will supersede the ferries on the Hudson, in the same way that the bridges and tunnels on the East River have superseded the ferries there.

But another tunnel system, now nearing completion, is of perhaps larger proportions, and of more far-reaching importance to the city, than anything yet projected. This is the tunnel and terminal project of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Its two tubes under the Hudson are driven through and connected with its terminal station at Thirty-Fourth Street; the extension under the city, and its four tubes under the East River connecting with



PL. 96. — BROOKLYN BRIDGE FROM FERRY SHED

THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK  
LIBRARY

the Long Island Railroad, are completed; there are only the track system and station arrangements to be added. Then a great trunk railway will be opened under the heart of the city. The connection with the Long Island Railroad, the extension of that road through the borough of Queens, and the crossing from Long Island City to the Bronx and thus up into New England, mean exits and entrances to the east; while the tunnel under Jersey City, and the connections out beyond the Hackensack meadows to Harrison, mean exits and entrances to the west. It is a great cross-section system that will render possible such through railway traffic from the east, west, and south as has never before been known.

The cost of this has been stupendous in time, energy, and money. For several years the work has gone on with feverish haste, men succeeding men by the thousands. There has been no stint of skill, science, energy, perseverance in the face of stubborn circumstances that at times threatened defeat; and there has been no question of cost with nearly a hundred millions of dollars set apart for the completion of the project. When the system is in operation, a thousand trains a day will come in at the Thirty-Fourth Street station. The maximum capacity of all the tubes is one hundred and forty-four trains an hour. Each train is to do no more than discharge or take on passengers at Thirty-Fourth Street, and is then to be sent under the East River to the Sunnyside yards at

Long Island City, where it is to be received and sent out again.

Even though there is no storage room for cars on the tracks under Thirty-Fourth Street, there are, nevertheless, four miles of platforms at this station to receive passengers, which means that the railway people are preparing to handle a hundred million passengers a year. This figure is too large for the average mind to realize. We have gotten into a habit in recent years of talking glibly about "millions," when such figures are almost unthinkable. Yet the hundred million passengers of the Pennsylvania Railroad station under Thirty-Fourth Street is not only a reasonable estimate, but one that will surely be realized.

The safety of the tunnels has already been sufficiently demonstrated. The Pennsylvania tubes are put together in huge iron rings, twenty-three feet in diameter, two and a half feet wide, and weighing fifteen tons each. They are strengthened by two feet of concrete, and are considered practically indestructible. The motive power in all of the tunnels is electricity, and the air in them is very like that of the subway. In passing through them there is a slight descent under the river, to be noticed by the observant; but the average traveler does not know whether he is under land or water. He reaches his destination swiftly and safely; and that, ordinarily, is his only interest. He gets what he desires, — rapid transit, — and a very satisfactory quality of it at that.

It is perhaps unnecessary to outline the further tube-and-tunnel projects that are under way in building, like the Steinway tunnel; or are planned, like the Interborough and McAdoo extensions, the Broadway-Lexington Avenue route, the Interterminal Belt Line, the Center Street loop, and the Canal Street subway. The half-dozen or more already in existence have proved that this is initially the most expensive but ultimately the most economical and altogether satisfactory method of rapid transit that can be used in the greater city. The rush in toward the center each morning and the rush out each night must be accepted and provided for. The rivers, since they cannot be crossed quickly, should be crept under; the outlying districts should be brought into touch with the more active centers of the city and made to yield more service; the circle city of the map should be unified.

There is very little doubt that the tunnels will be instrumental in producing this. Eventually the Greater New York should be a homogeneous unit, brought together and held together by an underground wheel every spoke of which converges and diverges from the central borough of Manhattan. No doubt the plan will undergo many changes, will be modified many times until it bears perhaps no resemblance to a wheel; and yet rapid transit still be accomplished by following the general principle of radiation.





## TRAFFIC AND TRADE





Pl. XXV. ALONG RIVERSIDE DRIVE







## CHAPTER XXV

### TRAFFIC AND TRADE

THE ancient cities of the world were never seriously troubled by matters of rapid transit. They were built originally as places of refuge, and the inhabitants, secure behind walls of stone, finally adopted them as permanent living places. Travel through the city, and through the gates of the city, was largely on foot. The dusty caravan stopped without the walls. The camel did not pass through the eye of the needle. Goods were brought into the bazaars and the markets on the backs of porters. Everything moved slowly. Traffic and trade were very leisurely affairs in the Old World.

Even in the present era, and in some parts of modern Europe, the question of time would seem of minor importance. Haste is generally spoken of as "unseemly," and travel means something of days and distance. The city is still a home for inhabitants, rather than a hive or a mart for workers. The railway, like the caravan, stops outside the walls. A station within the city, with its accompaniment of rumbling trains and roaring viaducts, would be disturbing to the householders. Only

a few of the larger places, like London, Paris, and Berlin, have admitted railways into the heart of the city, have put in underground tubes, and developed the more modern means of transit. They are slowly waking to the consciousness that a city may be more valuable as a place of trade than as a place of residence — a consciousness that has been with New York for many years.

If the suggestion made some chapters back be accepted, that the city is primarily a shop or a factory, then it becomes apparent that to continue successful in trade it must be frequently remodeled or newly built. Its machinery should be of the most modern type, and work with the greatest efficiency. Wide entrances to the business centers, direct communication for speed, huge buildings for capacity, unlimited markets for barter and sale, are necessary parts of the machinery. It is not possible to lead in commerce without them. New York quite understands this, but has always been hampered in carrying the idea into practice by the continuance of the old residential idea — the force of tradition. Recently it has begun to free itself and develop commercially, with vast projects for bulk and marvelous schemes for expedition. The turbulence of its changes and improvements has kept the older city in bewilderment for twenty years. It is fast fitting itself to be the one master trader of the world.

This inclination toward commerce was with it at birth.



THE PROPERTY  
OF THE  
NEW-YORK  
BOTANICAL GARDEN



PL. 97. — WEST STREET LOOKING NORTH

The site of Manhattan was discovered, occupied, and built upon by traders, because it was a place naturally fitted for trade. The inherited inclination has grown into an energy of enormous power; but without the natural geographical advantages of the city it might never have developed. The harbor with all its difficulties for rapid-transit engineers, is the natural highway of the world's ships — the inlet and the outlet of America's commerce. The ocean water-ways connecting with the inland water-ways in continuous lines of transportation, not only throughout the port and the country but around and about the globe, have made the city the logical point of arrival and departure. With these natural highways, supplemented by the railways and other transit thoroughfares, it is easy enough to understand how and why New York should become the great terminal station of traffic and trade.

And be it remembered that traffic and trade are the breath of its nostrils. Its face has always been set that way. One has but to think for a moment of the vast equipment of commerce to be convinced of this — the ships, the docks, the bridges, the viaducts; the tunnels, subways, tramways, railways; the elevators, storehouses, mills, factories; the exchanges, banks, depositories, treasuries; the thousands of business buildings, the hundreds of thousands of offices, the millions of people engaged in business pursuits. The great strain of the

present day is to make equipment larger, better, more effective. Bridges and tubes follow each other in rapid succession; new channels are being dredged to the ocean; the railways to the north and east are building great extensions; the Chelsea dock improvement and the huge Bush Terminal are no sooner finished than plans for enormous city docks in South Brooklyn and at Jamaica Bay are started; the subways for passengers work so effectively that immediately a subway for freight that shall put an underground water-front ring about the city is projected and financed. Greater enterprises, larger plans, more capital, more wonderful schemes, are continually being launched; and tall buildings, each one more sky-scraping than its predecessor, are daily breaking the new sky line of the city. It is all done in the name of business. There is no questioning about the ruling passion in these dominions.

Yet smitten with its love of money, working night and day for trade, New York still has time to live and enjoy life after its fashion. The creature comforts are indulged in with extravagance, by those who live along the mid-ridge district. What city shall you find with such ornate restaurants and such luxurious hotels? They are barbaric in their prodigality of splendor. Where shall you see such richly furnished apartments and houses, such clubs and societies, such operas and theaters? Again they are almost savage in their gilt and glitter. Where

shall you meet with such dresses and furs and jewels, such equipages and liveries, such ballroom magnificence, such dinner-table abundance? Once more they appear at times semi-gothic in their pretension and arrogance. And yet, in spite of the suggestion that the average New Yorker possesses only a brain and a body, it will be found that he has a soul and keeps longing for higher, nobler things. He aspires to art, literature, and education; he dreams of Apollo and of the Muses; he nurses ethical and social ideals, and has charity for all the world. True enough, he erects many sky-scrapers for business and frankly dedicates them to mammon, but he also builds many fair structures to fame and learning, and many high temples to God.

These are the sharp contrasts that give the city such a contradictory character. They seem quite impossible of synthesis or reconciliation, because they are not one thing, but many things in one. Hence the difficulty of trying to summarize or epitomize either the place or the people. After a few generalizations one stands lost in wonder at the tremendous flux, the ever increasing scale in changes, the restless energy, the ceaseless struggle for greater attainment. This year we are astonished by the figures of passengers carried, freight handled, ships cleared; of bank credits, exchange clearances, trade balances; of buildings erected, tunnels constructed, streets opened. But next year the figures will be larger,

the output more enormous, the income more fabulous. The wonder of to-day becomes the commonplace of yesterday; and still we keep mounting higher and higher, moving more and more swiftly.

What shall be in the future no man dare predict, save in figures fantastic. With its volume and energy, its commerce and its wealth, who shall say what cloud-born fancies may not be realized in the days to come! A few years ago, having outgrown its sixty-eight square miles on the island of Manhattan, the city expanded into an area of three hundred and twenty-seven square miles. Shall it stop there? Men called visionaries see the future port of New York at Montauk Point, with all Long Island in the greater ring. Shall it come to pass? No one can say. And yet, again, without the seer's eye or the prophet's ken, one can see the indication and the suggestion. From the high tower of the Singer or the Metropolitan Building the eye travels around the ring and sees waterways, landways, bridgeways, railways, radiating and crossing, leading outward and onward; and, following them closely, the new streets and buildings of the growing city. Who knows that the city will stop at the thirty-mile limit, — that it will stop at all?

There is indication of still other things. New York will be a city with perhaps more grouping about municipal, business, and traffic centers than now; but there is no suggestion that it will ever become a formal city, or like in plan to any other place that has ever existed.



PL. 98. — EAST RIVER — BROOKLYN SIDE



WITHDRAWN



That it will be a city of high buildings seems certain; and that it will always have its harbor setting, its brilliant light and color, its sea-blue haze, and its mountain-blue air can hardly be doubted. The high dome and tower glittering in the sun, the white wall half lost in shadow, the background of colored minarets projected against the blue sky, should be heightened in splendor by the increase of scale. A city, magnificently picturesque, should be the result. The likeness to Constantinople should fade out as too diminutive and inadequate; the resemblance to some city of Arabian Nights fancy should grow.

In the time to come, a quarter of a century hence, the traveler returning to New York may find that the age of wonders has not passed. The city should be more awe-inspiring than than ever — a city of the same hurrying energy perhaps, devoted to business still, leavening its life with the humanities here and there, aspiring to mentality and even to righteousness; but always a city of commerce, of display, of wealth and luxury, of color and light. The greatest port on any sea, with the wealth of the Americas back of it, it should outsoar in majesty and outshine in splendor any other city of the modern world. A slighter commerce and a less virile energy heaped magnificence upon Tyre and Carthage and Rome. Why not the repetition of the tale, increased a hundred fold, in the New New York?











DEC 8 - 1941

